LONG ENGAGEMENTS;

A TALE OF THE AFFGHAN REBELLION.

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IN ONE VOLUME.

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LONG ENGAGEMENTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE CITY OF PALACES—AN EVENING DRIVE.

"The charmed sunset lingered low a-down
In the red west."

Tennyson.

"——— I hear
A busy stir of men about the streets."

Shelley.

It was the beginning of the cold season in Calcutta—for even in Calcutta there is a "cold season"—a season when the rays of the sun are not much more scorching than in the height of our English dog-days; when to face the meridian glare, and to brave the meridian sun, is not positive destruction; and when at morning and evening-tide the outer air is more than cool—a season when physical exertion is always possible and often pleasant—when a brisk walk or a hard gallop is not neces-

sarily productive of extreme exhaustion—when men can wear broad-cloth, and women silk; and a small fire in a large room is sometimes almost bearable.

It was the beginning of the cold season in Calcutta—the early part of November; that pleasant period of abundant hope, when the great heart of European society in India begins once again to beat with renewed vigour, after months of sluggish circulation, almost of suspended life; when the frame, after a long sleep of exhaustion, begins again to show symptoms of vital energy; and hopes and wishes,

"——— long subdued,
Subdued and cherished long,"

again become operative in the breasts of men and gentler womankind; and some are full of thoughts of the coming voyage *home;* some from that home are looking for the return of wives too long absent, or daughters reared beneath strangers' eyes, or sons who since their earliest childhood have known their parents only by name; some are stirred by thoughts of another mould—thoughts of impending official changes—of lucrative situations and honourable posts about to be vacated and re-filled—of the larger loaf or the heavier fish about to be grasped by the eager hand long stretched out in attitude of expectancy; some flutter with hopes, not less active, after their kind—hopes of a season of cold weather gaiety; balls, and concerts, and pic-nics, varying the perennial dinner-parties; and visions, floating before soft eyes, of those magnificent investments of velvets, silks, satins, and millinery multiform, about to fill the long saloons of the huge commission-houses which present to the dwellers

in the City of Palaces the choicest produce of London and of Paris. Many and very varied the hopes with which the heart of society is stirred at this season of transition—of going out and of coming in—of constant metempsychosis; many and varied these feelings, but to all is it a season of hope, for if there be nothing else to be looked for, there is, at all events, a mitigation, if not a cessation, of the destroying heat, which, during eight months of the year, converts life into bare existence.

It was an evening in the first week of November. The setting sun, just touching the horizon, had thrown into deep shadow the western bank of the Hooghly river. The evening was cool, though the day had been sultry for that season of the year, and there were signs in the chief streets of Calcutta, and on the roads which intersect the wide plain before it, that the business of the day was done. The houses of the European inhabitants had been everywhere unclosed, the heavy Venetian doors and the lofty glass windows had been thrown open, and the outer blinds of the verandahs drawn up, to give admittance to the evening breeze; and from these verandahs, now become pleasant places of resort, might be seen everywhere a stream of life pouring out of that part of the great city, in which private business and public affairs are transacted during the day. Humble native writers and other underlings, with their white turbands, and dusk faces, and flowing drapery, were wending homewards on foot; fat *sircars*, or native agents and brokers, were to be seen, through the open doors of their palanquins, borne on the shoulders of four slight, nearly naked bearers; subordinate government officers and mer-

cantile assistants were creaking on in little carriages, resembling wheeled-palanquins, drawn by a single pony, towards their homes in the outskirts of the town; whilst the well-groomed Arab, or the stylish cabriolet, or the capacious palentum, with its two bright well-harnessed Cape horses, and its three liveried attendants, bore to their mansions in wide Chowringhee, the well-paid civilian, or staff-officer, or wealthy merchant, to prepare for the evening drive. The work of the day was done. The evening had brought rest to all, enjoyment to many. Calcutta was a-stir—abroad again. Carriages of every fashion, great and small, open and shut, of great pretension and of no pretension, were streaming along all the thoroughfares; and forth from the wide balconies of Chowringhee, many a gentle dame, in shawl and bonnet, clad for her daily drive—the only exercise of the day—looked forth in expectation of the return from office of her lord and master.

Among these expectants was Mrs. Balfour. From the verandah of a spacious mansion in the Chowringhee Road, the Park Lane of Calcutta, she stood watching the numerous vehicles which the great city, now well-nigh deserted, poured forth across the busy plain. Beneath the portico stood a carriage, a green britzka, coachman on box, and groom on either side, standing beside the sleek Arabs, *chowry* in hand, making lazy pretence of brushing away the flies. A better appointed equipage on the whole, than the generality of those which figure on the Calcutta course—good horses, well-built carriage, silver-mounted harness, not dimmed by neglect, and attendants, in cleanly picturesque livery,

not disgracing the carriage and its owner. All was in readiness for the evening drive.

And Mr. Balfour—ah! there he is. The lady has recognised the buggy and the grey horse. Across the road, into the compound, and in another minute he is standing in the verandah, beside his wife.

He has great news to communicate. Mrs. Balfour could not be mistaken. In his manner, as he hurried across the drawing-room, and emerged through the open window into the verandah; in the expression of his face, as he saluted her; it was impossible not to read aright the intelligence of which he was the bearer. She said at once: "The *Southampton* is in."

"And who told you?—Ah! I thought I should have been the first to communicate the news; but you women . . . ."

"No treason, love. . . . We women can read faces as well as books, *some*-times. Who told me? Your face told me. I could see it all at once. And the *Southampton* is really in?"

"Yes; she was semaphored about an hour ago. She is under tow of a steamer, and every thing in her favour; but I doubt whether she will reach Diamond Harbour to-night."

"And you, Edmund—what shall you do? You did talk of going down the river to meet the ship. . . Shall you really do it? Is there any use?"

"Perhaps not," said Mr. Balfour. "I have been thinking about the matter, but have not yet come to a conclusion. I thought I would determine nothing, until I had consulted you:

"'A fresh eye—a fresh hand,
May do much at our vigour's waning point.'

as your friend Browning says, through his hero Paracelsus. Come, I have read, if I mistake not, of minds which are never so creative as when the body is in motion—of authors, who could only invent in their carriages—of statesmen, who could mature no great schemes, save when seated in the saddle. We need not lose our evening drive, because the *Southampton* is in . . . I will postpone my toilet until we return. Let us settle this great matter on the course."

"Why, if you really think," said Mrs. Balfour, "that you will have to set off this evening, we had better determine the question before we go out. Remember that we are engaged to dine with Dr. Winter."

"So we are—no disparagement to Winter, my best of good friends—but that is rather a bore. I always do think when the time comes, that these dinner-parties are a bore . . . but just now . . . However, I am quite sure that when Winter knows the *Southampton* is in, he will not expect to see us. A man, whose two sisters have just arrived from England, may well be excused, if he sends an apology at the last moment."

"And Dr. Winter is so kind—so ready always to make excuses for others, that he would be sure to receive ours, without a feeling of vexation—vexatious as it is to receive apologies, just as one is about to sit down to dinner. Still, I do so hate to be disappointed myself, that I would fain not disappoint others, if it can possibly be avoided. If you do not determine to go down the river, to meet your sisters, there is

no reason why we should not dine with the worthy doctor." . . .

"Except," said Balfour, laughing, "that I have a new number of the 'Edinburgh' in my office-box, and that it contains an article by Macaulay, which I very much want to read. But, come along, we will settle the matter in the carriage; or you may consider it settled now. You need not write to the doctor. . . .

"There is no sort of use," he continued, as the carriage crossed the great plain lying between Chowringhee Road and the river—"no sort of use in starting off to-night to meet the ship. The girls will have received letters from us at the Sand-Heads—so, long ere this they will have been put out of suspense; and if I were now to put myself into a budgerow I could not see the girls to-night; and if I could, it is doubtful whether they would sleep any the better for it. Their poor little heads must be in a whirl, come what may, during the next four-and-twenty hours. The ship will be under weigh again before dawn to-morrow morning, and it is not at all improbable that I might miss her altogether, if the morning were foggy. Perhaps we had better await altogether the arrival of the ship. She will be up before two o'clock to-morrow. You remember that Spencer Smith went down to meet his daughter last year, and that when the ship was opposite the fort, Smith was wondering, between Kedgeree and Diamond Harbour, what had become of her. At all events, we will not disappoint the doctor to-night."

"I am very glad," said Mrs. Balfour, "I cannot tell you how glad. I did not at all like the idea of your taking a nocturnal trip down the river, especially at

this season of the year—and you, too, so far from strong. And yet I scarcely liked to remonstrate—I thought it would be so selfish. Poor girls! how glad they must be to have reached the end of their voyage."

"And how glad I shall be to learn that nothing unpleasant has happened on the voyage. I have unbounded confidence in the captain—I might almost add, unbounded confidence in the girls——"

"Why almost?—why this qualification, Edmund?"

"As regards Mary, there is no abatement of the feeling," returned Balfour; "she is so very steady, so sage in her gentleness—so, at least, every one tells me and so her letters, if they are to be trusted as faithful exponents, declare her to be. She was, you know, when we saw her last, though quite a child, so steady, even then; but Adela, though older, more experienced, she has not half Mary's steadiness of character, has not nearly so much prudence, so much fixity of principle—and she—"

"Has a safeguard," interrupted Mrs. Balfour, "beyond what environs her sister. Surely, in her situation, she would be most prudent."

"Surely, most prudent," repeated Balfour. "Yes, I hope so—most prudent, but then . . . ."

He stopped—they were on the course, amidst a throng of carriages and horsemen. A gentleman, on a large boney English mare, had ridden up to the side of the britzka, and after bowing to Mrs. Balfour, said: "You know, I suppose, that the *Southampton* is in—congratulate you, Balfour."

"Thank you, Grey—my good fellow... You have heard nothing, I suppose, from the ship?"

"Nothing. I heard at C— and Co.'s—they are her agents—that she was expected up about noon to-morrow. She has made a very good voyage—a splendid ship, they tell me. Courtnay has started off to meet her. His wife, you know, is on board. The Blenkinsons, too, are there. They say that if Harris really does go home this year, and if Mathison goes to the Sudder, Blenkinson will step into the Secretariat. Have you heard any thing about it?"

"Nothing. I have heard—but—I'll tell you another time. Are we to meet you at Winter's to-night?"

"Yes, I dine with the doctor, and am delighted to find that I shall meet you there. Have you read that last article of Macaulay's? I see that the first portion of it is in the papers to-day."

"No; I have the review in my office-box, ready for the first leisure evening."

"And the 'first leisure evening' now, my good fellow, appears to be a very remote contingency. You will not have many leisure evenings, now that the fair sisters have arrived. Do you know, I almost wish that I had a brace of sisters on board the *Southampton*, to cheer my bachelor home. These long evenings . . ."

"Are not," interposed Mrs. Balfour, smiling, "very often passed in the 'bachelor home' of which you speak."

"And if they are," said Mr. Balfour, "it is your own fault, so no more grumbling. You need never spend an evening alone, whilst we are disengaged; an assertion which is not, in our case, as it is in that of the Groves, the Blackwoods, and other friends, who

never are disengaged, tantamount to nothing. By the way, *à-propos* of my sisters, is there any news from Caubul to-day?"

"I don't know—I have not heard any thing; but I saw Clay go by just now; I will ride after and ask him. If I learn any thing, I will tell you at Winter's. Adieu!" And Herbert Grey, adroitly threading his way through the tangled mass of carriages which covered the course, rode off towards the Fort.

"An excellent fellow Grey," said Mr. Balfour; "we have not in all the service a better. We civilians have reason to be proud of many of our brethren, but of none more so than of Herbert Grey."

"He is a favourite of mine," said Mrs. Balfour; "he is so clever, and yet so unaffected. There is so much simplicity, so much sincerity, so much sound principle in his character. Simplicity of character, I think, is a distinguishing mark of a great mind. I don't know any one in whom there is such an entire absence of littleness. I have often thought that I should be so glad if he were to love your sister Mary."

"And I have often thought," interrupted Balfour, "that I should be so sorry. Grey has been, for some time, deeply involved. For so young a man—not yet ten years in the service—he has held very good appointments; is now acting in one, with a much higher salary than men of his standing are wont to enjoy. Still his income is not large—cannot be for some years—and, as I said, he is deeply involved. He was extravagant when in college—not so selfishly extravagant as most of us are (I was much worse, that's very

certain), but very, very generous. His purse always open to a friend; and I know, that from the very first, he remitted considerable sums to England, his family, though a good one, being in somewhat necessitous circumstances. I have heard—though never from himself, for no one is more cordially averse to self-glorification than Grey—that during the two first years of his sojourn in India, he repaid to his mother all the money spent on his education at Haileybury, his outfit, his passage, &c.; and this, of course, could not be done without his borrowing largely. He has always been a little careless about money matters, until within the last year, when he began to think seriously about them, and I think it occurred to him that it was not very creditable to be in debt. He is now most strenuously economising, paying off three-fourths of his allowances; and whilst he is in this state, I think it by no means desirable that he should fall in love with my sister.

"Not," continued Balfour, "because I wish Mary to win a rich husband. If I have not much mistaken her character, she would be equally happy with a poor one. But Grey—I know him too well to think, that whatever feelings might be awakened in his breast, he would ever suffer himself to betray them, before he has shaken off entirely the present incubus of debt. I should be deeply grieved, therefore, if he were to fall in love with Mary—grieved on his account, for it would make him miserable—grieved on our account, for it would almost infallibly deprive us entirely of his society—and I know no man's society which I could not better spare."

"You are right, very right, Edmund," said Mrs. Balfour. "Better that it should not be—much; and yet it is not improbable. I think that there must be something in their characters so much alike, and Mr. Grey has so much respect, so much affection for you. But as you have clearly shown it to be evil—and evil we will not prognosticate at such a time—let us think no more about it. You were saying before he came up to the carriage—that is, I had just asked you, why you did not feel confident that Adela, protected as she is, would have undergone in perfect safety the ordeal of board-ship."

"Did I say so?—Well, perhaps it was not fair to express a doubt, a suspicion. I was only thinking of Adela's character—volatile, wayward, impulsive. She thinks so little . . . is so giddy . . . so prone to do foolish things, without knowing that they are foolish, sometimes to do wrong things, without knowing that they are wrong."

"But, then, engaged to be married . . ."

"True, love," said Mr. Balfour; "but danger there is still. She was very young when she was first engaged . . . she has not seen her intended for more than a year—nearly two years. When she engaged herself to Carrington, she had seen little or nothing of the world: since that time, she has been much in society; the impression may have worn off . . . she may have seen others; others, perhaps, with greater attractions."

"The old story," exclaimed Mrs. Balfour.

"Yes, the old story, but one not the less likely on that account to be told over again. These old stories

are often 'ower true'. I only speak of possibilities—only express misgivings, which, sometimes, I utterly discard, and which, when they are strongest, I hesitate to express even to *you*. I may have wronged Adela, or rather others may have wronged her—she may have wronged herself—for the inferences I have drawn are unavoidable; but thinking her the character which she is represented, which she represents herself to be, I cannot help thinking of the possibility of her committing some indiscretion; trifling, perhaps, but still an indiscretion."

"It is very difficult," said Mrs. Balfour, "not to commit indiscretions on board-ship—people are so critical—so scandalous. They have so little to do but to pull their neighbours to pieces. Every one is so watched, every thing is so apparent, and then out of thirty or forty passengers, there are sure to be two or three ill-natured ones. It does assuredly require an enormous amount of discretion to escape calumny altogether. There is no situation in the world that calls for so much self-vigilance, so much self-denial, so much extreme caution, erring rather on the side of prudery, than the situation of a young girl on board-ship. But," she added, after a brief pause, "Adela's position is peculiar, and in spite of her waywardness, she has much good feeling, good principle, I hope, and being engaged to be married, she will feel that on others' account, as well as her own, it is necessary to be cautious, very cautious. Besides, I hope that she will not have the inclination to be indiscreet."

"I have thought much about it," returned Balfour, "and it appears to me—perhaps unreasonably—but I

sometimes think that this very engagement rather increases than diminishes the danger. Being engaged, she may imagine that without impropriety she can allow herself greater latitude of conduct—that she need not watch every action, every word—that there is less fear of being misunderstood, less fear of motive, of design being attributed to her, than to one whose lot has not been already drawn. Besides, there is always in this circumstance of prior engagement that which invites familiarity from others, removes a barrier of restraint, and leads to an amount of intimacy between unmarried people which could not otherwise exist. 'Let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' There is danger in such intimacies. The best intentions are insufficient, most insufficient safe-guards. Even with more steadiness of principle—more depth of feeling than Adela possesses, there is danger, great danger—and with the knowledge, too, that Carrington is so far off that even now some time may elapse before the compact is fulfilled."

"But does she know it—I mean did she always know it throughout the voyage? I thought she had expected, when she sailed, to find him in Calcutta."

"She could scarcely have expected it, sanguine as she is—I could never," continued Balfour, "encourage her in the hope that Carrington would be at the presidency much before Christmas. At the best, he would not be able to leave Caubul before the end of October, though he says at the beginning—perhaps, not then; and think of the distance. Besides, what if he were not able to leave the country? I fear, in spite of all that is said about the tranquillity of Affghanistan, the country is in a very

unsettled condition. The envoy and his assistants are too sanguine. They see nothing but good, and yet even at this distance it is impossible not to perceive the dangers which hem them in. The political eye appears to have lost all keenness of vision, or it is wilfully closed against the truth. We will hope for the best. Do not express any misgivings before my sister, but I think it very probable that Carrington will not be able to leave Caubul quite so soon as we have been calculating."

"I thought," said Mrs. Balfour, "that his regiment was to return to the provinces this season."

"If the state of affairs in Affghanistan will admit of such a movement.... Doubtful, I think, very doubtful. They talk about diminishing the force, and in this case Carrington's corps will be the first to return; but they cannot diminish the force ... it is madness; and Europeans —queen's regiments—are wanted most of all. They cannot possibly spare a regiment of Europeans at such a time."

"This is very sad," said Mrs. Balfour, sorrowfully; "I had no idea that affairs were in so unsettled a state: how I grieve for poor Adela."

"And I too, most deeply, but let us hope the best; I would not fill you with misgivings, if it were not necessary that we should be cautious when my sisters arrive; we may hear some intelligence this evening from the north-west. Ah! here is Danvers; perhaps he may know something."

As the carriage at this time formed one of the components of a dense mass of vehicles, not very unlike

what may be seen on the Epsom road on a Derby day, the horses were moving onward at a slow walk. To make one's way on horseback through the narrow uncertain intervals between the carriages is no easy matter even to the adroit equestrian, quick-eyed and supple-handed. Still it is often done, and rarely with any detriment even to the apparel of the fearless rider. Captain Danvers was a first-rate horseman; he rode as well as he waltzed. As he was an A.D.C., it was fitting that he should possess both accomplishments in perfection.

Well-dressed, good-looking, with a most unexceptionable moustache—a black moustache *au naturel*—Captain Danvers, A.D.C., had a very good opinion of himself; and, in justice, it must be added that there were many fair ladies in Chowringhee by no means disinclined to endorse it. But he was not only a lady's man; he was a very good sort of a fellow, rather popular with his own sex, in spite of the leaven of dandyism which was mixed up with his character; and even quiet, sensible people like the Balfours looked upon him as a very harmless creature, at no time to be avoided, and very often—that is, whenever a dinner-party was to be made up—to be courted for his agreeable qualities.

He was presently beside the carriage, one white-gloved hand resting on the door of the britzka. A few words of common salutation interchanged between the captain and the lady, Mr. Balfour broke in with the question—" Any thing fresh from Caubul to-day, Danvers—what news at Government House?"

Danvers shook his head mysteriously. It was plain that he had nothing of a very cheering character to communicate. "Bad news, I fear?" said Balfour.

"Not exactly . . . however, to tell you the truth, I do not know a great deal about it. Not that there is any desire to conceal the truth . . . but I have been out almost all day. They are above concealment . . . or I, as in duty bound, should now be telling you that every thing is in a most flourishing condition. I believe that the news is not very encouraging. I met Oswald on the stairs, as I was going up to dress, and he said that there was a likelihood of disturbances in the north, risings anticipated, the aspect of affairs gloomy . . . I dare say that at the newspaper offices, they know quite as much as we do at Government House . . . and that you will learn more than I can tell you, from the papers to-morrow morning . . ."

"Do you think," asked Balfour, eagerly, "that the regiments are likely to be detained—no hope of their return to the provinces?"

"None, I fear . . . but I was going to ask you when you expect your sisters . . . When may I pay my respects, Mrs. Balfour? you must let me be among the first."

"Certainly—my doors are not very often shut . . . but we must leave the poor girls at least one day to collect themselves . . ."

"Assuredly . . . but, Mrs. Balfour . . ." he would have added something, but he was interrupted by a commotion among the carriages, which rendered it highly expedient that the captain should gather up his

reins, touch the flanks of his horse gently with his spurs, and rapidly extricate himself, by a skilful manœuvre, from the crash which appeared inevitable. He saved himself. The Balfours' coachman took advantage of an opening, and pushed on just at the critical moment . . . . . . "I fear that there is no chance for Carrington," said the gentleman, as they drove home.

CHAPTER II.

"AN OLD INDIAN."

"His sixty summers—what are they in truth?
By Providence peculiarly blest,
With him the strong hilarity of youth
Abides despite grey hairs, a constant guest......
That heart the simplest, gentlest, kindest, best."
Henry Taylor.

Dr. Winter was a member of the Medical Board. As a seat in this dignified assemblage is attainable only by the three senior officers of the medical service, it need not be added that he was an elderly, if not an old man. Time does its work strenuously in India. It has every thing in its favour. It wrinkles the cheek; it bends the back; it dims the eye, with little trouble, for there is no resistance. Dr. Winter was not an old man, but he was an old Indian. He had lived thirty years in the country.

Thirty years—and never once at home. Never once, during all that time, had he tried what the fresh autumn breezes of his own western clime could do to smooth, to freshen up with a tinge of colour, his seamed and pallid face—what a brisk morning walk up the hill-sides of the north, or a twenty mile ride across the open downs of the south of Britain, to remove the stoop from his shoulders, to restore muscular strength and elasticity to his limbs. And yet he was not a bad sample of an old

Indian. He had suffered little from ill-health; and though, as the natives of India very aptly express it, he was *dried up*, there was a good deal of life remaining in him. He had outgrown the dangers of the climate; and old Indians, if they can only attain a certain age, are very apt to live for ever.

Dr. Winter had something much better in him than a good deal of life. He had a fund of good qualities. If he were destined to "burn to the socket," it was not because his heart was "dry as summer's dust." He had a very excellent heart; warm, expansive—glowing with kindly sympathies; generous, humane, charitable. Every one said that Winter had a good heart; and the world, in his case, did not, as the world often does say so, because he had no head; for Winter was an able, intelligent man—learned in his own profession, well-acquainted with the literature and the politics of the present and of past ages—a good linguist, and there had been a time, when he was generally esteemed as a first-rate musician. His abilities were naturally good, and he had never ceased to cultivate them. Time, though it had wrinkled his brow, had not impaired his memory, nor blunted his keenness of apprehension. All acknowledged that it was a pleasure to converse with him, and the pleasure was easily obtainable. Among all the hospitable inhabitants of hospitable Calcutta, there was not one who, in genuine, graceful hospitality, surpassed Dr. Winter. Though by no means incapable of enjoying "the hermitage of his study," and never feeling that he was alone, when surrounded by his books, the kindly impulses of his nature moved him to throw open

his doors—to fence himself around with friends—to share with others the blessings which Providence had bestowed upon him. His visiting list included the names of as much of the society of Calcutta as, to use a homely expression, is "worth knowing," by a man of high principle and some refinement; and it would be an injustice to that society, if it should be added that this segment is not a considerable one. Among Dr. Winter's more intimate friends, were the ablest and the best members of Calcutta society; and there is, perhaps, no society in the world of which it may be more emphatically said, that the best are the ablest, and the ablest are the best.

But the hospitality of Dr. Winter was not limited to the entertainment of his friends at the dinner-table. His house, a spacious one, was always full. A widower, with no children (his only daughter, a fair girl of seventeen, had, a few years before, been cut off by a brain fever), he had ample means to indulge his kindly inclinations—space enough in his house, money enough in his purse—to offer a home to all who needed one. Whenever he felt secure in the conviction that an invitation to spend a few weeks in his house would be an act of real kindness to a friendless stranger, just arrived in the country, or to a family come down from the Upper Provinces, on their way homeward, and anxious not to diminish the scanty store, saved up, painfully enough, to defray the necessary expenses of the hardly-earned furlough trip, an invitation was sent. No man ever took more pains to turn his hospitality to good account. His kindliness was of the most discriminating

character. He did not, as many do, receive the rich into his house, and send the poor invitations to dinner. "No; no,"—he would sometimes say, in reply to an offer from some considerate old friend, to inflict himself and family on the worthy doctor, for a few weeks, when on their passage through the presidency—"I can find no room for *you*. A man who, for the last ten years, has been drawing more than three thousand rupees a month, may afford to go to the hotel. If he cannot, I have no sympathy with him in his poverty. I have just received a letter from our friend * * *, who tells me that Mr.— (naming a subaltern officer in the army) is coming down to Calcutta, on his way to England—his wife being seriously ill. I have been asked to receive them. There is a large family; and I intend to receive them all. I know nothing of the man, except that he bears a very high character, and is in very straitened circumstances. My dear ——, *you* bear a high character, but you are *not* in straitened circumstances; so I must send you to the hotel. I shall be happy to see you to dinner as often as you will come—the oftener the better, as you know—but I cannot take you into my house, without excluding the poor lieutenant." And all knew so well, and so fully appreciated, the sincerity of the good man, that they smiled at his candour—liked him the better for it; whilst the general comment elicited was contained in the three words, "so like Winter."

The dinner-party, to which the Balfours and Herbert Grey had been invited, was not one of those large dinners (or as in India they are called *burra-khanas*), which are so frequent in the cold season, and which

even the parching arid sultriness of the hot weather, and the exhausting steamy atmosphere of the rains, are wholly insufficient to impede. It was a party of some twelve, all well known to one another, with the exception of a young cadet newly arrived from England, and a lady, who had recently come down from the Mofussil, on the painful, most painful duty of despatching her children to England; and these were the inmates of the house. Dr. Winter did not send out his invitations alphabetically; nor did he keep any other description of roster, nor think whose turn it was to be invited next, when he made up his mind to assemble a party of guests at his dinner-table. Parties often are made up—and in one part of the globe as adroitly as in another—with the most elaborate care, that no two of the guests present shall know any two other members of the party. As Dr. Winter had no particular desire to subject his friends to four hours of suffering, he adopted an opposite course; and the result, had he been aware of it in its fullest extent, must have been eminently encouraging. No one ever said that Dr. Winter's parties were "stupid." Even Balfour, who invariably on his return from office, declared it to be "a great bore," when he remembered that he was engaged to dine abroad, never came home from the good doctor's without acknowledging that he had spent a very pleasant evening. He said, and many others said so too, that he never passed a few hours beneath Winter's roof, without learning something there: something worth carrying home and keeping.

On the present occasion, perhaps, he was in a state of mind little calculated to profit by the interchange of

information and sentiment with intelligent men. He was anxious, full of thought, thought partly pleasurable, partly painful; but it was useless to worry himself, and he endeavoured to forget the *Southampton*—to forget his sisters—to forget the war in Affghanistan. This it was not easy to achieve. When the Balfours entered the room, the party invited were all assembled, all with the exception of one gentleman who always made his appearance after dinner had been announced, and who, therefore, became the subject of a very original witticism, by earning for himself the distinguishing appellative of the *late* Mr. Merton. With a considerable majority they were intimately acquainted. There were Mr. and Mrs., and Miss Everard Argyle (a judge of the Sudder, his wife and daughter)—there was Captain Prior, a distinguished diplomatic agent, who had recently, in the wilds of Toorkistan, been taken captive by the insolent foe, and sold to slavery. There was Herbert Grey, a civilian of high promise, with whom our readers have already some slight acquaintance; and there was a cavalry officer, named Palus, a man of great attainments and considerable originality, who would have taken a high place in the estimation of the world, if his judgment had been equal to his talents. These, with the two inmates of Dr. Winter's house, to whom we have made brief allusion, constituted the party of twelve.

"The *Southampton*,"—"The *Southampton*,"—every one had something to say about the *Southampton*: some congratulations to offer—congratulations which Balfour received with less apparent pleasure, than they who offered them anticipated. He thanked his friends;

but, as he spoke, his expressive face brightened not up with the gleams of a full and cordial satisfaction. He was obviously not in good spirits. In Mrs. Balfour's manner, too, there was something less than her wonted vivacity. She seemed thoughtful, if not sad. The answers which she returned to the questions, and the rejoinders which she made to the observations of Dr. Winter, who had seated himself on a sofa beside her, were always brief, often denoted a little absence of mind. The Balfours were evidently depressed at a time when they were expected to be unusually elated.

Of all present none devined the cause of this depression, save Herbert Grey. A little apart from the rest of the assembly, he stood in eager converse with Mr. Balfour. "I fear," he said, "that the state of affairs in Affghanistan is even worse than it is represented to be. The intelligence received to-day is, that the Eastern Ghilzees have risen, and have got possession of the passes between Caubul and Jullalabad. Sale had gone out against them, and achieved, it appears, some partial successes; but the road is still closed—the enemy, it seems, on either side of our force. What the state of affairs *at* Caubul may be, we can only conjecture."

"Bad enough, I should imagine. This terrible torch of insurrection one tribe casts to another, till the fire is spread over the whole country. Once in a flame, and God alone can extinguish it. I need not ask, Grey, what is the cause of these risings; but what is the proximate cause?"

"Clay tells me that the envoy has been tampering with the allowances of the Ghilzees. The allowances!

We have been buying peace, and now, it would seem, we are attempting to cheapen it. As though the huckstering system could possibly succeed. I think we are now looking upon what some people would call 'the beginning of the end.'"

"A melancholy prospect," returned Balfour, "and at such a season of the year; the dreadful snows of a Caubul winter just beginning to descend. Alas! for our poor fellows. We are about to see a national calamity. Every thing is in train for it. It is impossible not to take a profound and painful interest in such a business as this, but I have more than a common, a deep personal interest. Looking at the matter even in the most favourable point of view . . . sanguine to excess . . . hoping every thing, predicting nothing of evil . . . only looking to what is now ascertained fact, it is very certain that there will this year be no relief of the regiments in Affghanistan . . . and this, in itself, is to us a great domestic calamity."

"On Carrington's account? . . ."

"Yes—on his, on my sister's account. His regiment must be with Sale. Hemmed in, you say, between Caubul and Jullalabad—a perilous position, with a hostile population on every side. Sale, you tell me, has been engaged with the enemy—have you any particulars—any list of casualties?"

"Clay gave me the names, and I wrote them down, the officers wounded, I mean, and old Sale among them. He appears to have forced the Koord-Caubul pass on the 12th of last month. No officer killed—the wounded . . ." and Herbert Grey drew forth a card on

which he had written the names. "Carrington I know was not among them. I believe that these are all."

"All—yes—that is some consolation, and yet how slender!" exclaimed Balfour, "to escape to-day, perhaps only to fall to-morrow. Did you know Carrington?"

"Yes," said Grey, "I met him several times at your house last year—when he was on his way from England to rejoin his regiment. I liked what I saw of him much—a fine, open-hearted, manly fellow — so good-humoured, so cheerful."

"And yet not always cheerful," said Balfour, "even he had his hours of depression—there were seasons, when gloomy presentiments overshadowed the sunshine of his heart. He was deeply attached to my sister. He felt the separation acutely—often thought of what might be its consequences, and regretted that circumstances had not allowed of their union in England. I thought that would have been still worse—to leave his bride of a few months, and to hasten to his regiment in that distant country. Carrington thought otherwise, and she might, he said, have gone with him . . . . so many English ladies in Affghanistan. Poor fellow! I have often thought of the last day he passed with us, before he set out for the north. I drove him as far as Barrackpore, whence he was to proceed by dawk. As we drove through the park he said, after thanking me, with tears in his eyes, for the kindness (it was not, after all, very much) that I had shown him, 'You will think me very foolish, I know, but I have a vague presentiment, my dear fellow, that this

is my last drive through Barrackpore Park. I cannot shake off the fancy, morbid though it be, that I shall leave my bones in Affghanistan. A sickly thought.... very foolish.... one I know that ought not to be indulged; but these separations, Balfour, cut cruelly into a man's heart, bring down his spirits to Zero.' 'It was a great mistake,' I replied, as cheerfully as I could: spoke of his youth—his splendid stock of health—of the fine climate of Affghanistan—told him that such gloomy thoughts would prove but sorry companions during a long dawk journey; and finished by telling him, with a laugh, that ere the year was out, he would be driving through the same Barrackpore Park, on his way to the Flagstaff bungalow, at which so many honey-moons have been celebrated on the banks of the Hooghly. Poor Carrington! I fear that he is likely to be the truer prophet of the two."

"There is not yet any reason, my dear fellow," said Herbert Grey, "to entertain such apprehensions as these. To go into action is not necessarily to leave one's bones on the field. We will hope for the best.... Ah! here is the khansaman, announcing dinner; let me fly to secure Mrs. Balfour."

The old white-bearded, portly khansaman, or native butler, with hands respectfully pressed together, had announced the important fact of dinner being on the table, and Dr. Winter had given his arm to Mrs. Everard Argyle. Herbert Grey was just in time to carry off Mrs. Balfour, whose husband moved hastily across the room to offer his escort to Mrs. Lascelles, who, though a resident in the house, had but little

acquaintance with the majority of those present, and who therefore might have been shipwrecked. The diplomatist followed with Miss Argyle, whilst Captain Palus and the cadet brought up the rear; the late Mr. Merton joining the party as it crossed the hall, on its way to the dining-room.

"I am sorry," said Herbert Grey to Mrs. Balfour, shortly after they were seated at the dinner-table—a dinner-table furnished in the best possible taste—nothing gaudy, nothing meretricious, nothing *too-much-ish* about it, "sorry to see Balfour in bad spirits this evening. I had hoped that the arrival of the *Southampton* would have raised his spirits above summer-heat."

"So we all thought," said Mrs. Balfour; "but how little do we know where joy resides, where sorrow, until the hour arrives. We find neither where we looked for it."

"You speak more sadly—more despondingly even than your good husband," rejoined Herbert Grey; "really there is no just cause for gloomy apprehensions yet."

"*Yet!* oh, that miserable war!—if not *yet*, very soon, I fear. Even Captain Danvers admits that the country is in a very bad state. And you promised to learn something for us."

He told the lady all that he had learnt.

"It will be a sad blow to poor Adela," said Mrs. Balfour, "I know not what she will do. She is very sanguine—very impulsive. She overleaps impossibilities. We have written to her at the Sand-Heads,

telling her that Mr. Carrington could not, for some time at least, appear in Calcutta, though when we wrote we had, of course, no suspicion that his return would be indefinitely deferred. But, poor girl, she, I fear, will laugh to scorn our anticipations—will feel quite satisfied, in her own mind, that he will be here immediately. She never thinks of insuperable impediments, of general orders, commanders-in-chief, leaves-of-absence, courts-martial, and such little things as these."

"You know the Miss Balfours well," said Grey, and there was more of the affirmative than of the interrogative, in the tones wherein he uttered the words.

"Yes, very well—that is, not personally, so much as by the report of others—by their own letters—six or seven years have elapsed since I saw them last—shortly after we were married. They had then, though mere children, very marked characters—much what, I imagine, they have now. Sweet little girls—though very different—different in every respect."

Herbert Grey was about to ask whether they were much like Balfour, when his attention was arrested by the voice of the young cadet, who sat on his left hand, and who was asking Balfour *à-propos* of something that had been said by Dr. Winter, whether his sisters were in Edinburgh last spring.

Balfour answered in the affirmative.

"Indeed," said the young gentleman, who seemed to have imported with him no very slender stock of assurance, "then I have the honour of their acquaintance. I assure you that they were extremely admired —universally admired."

"I am glad to hear it," said Balfour, coldly.

"Yes," continued the youthful aspirant for military renown, "I never met any girls who were more admired. Every body said that they were the prettiest girls who had been seen in Edinburgh for some years. Miss Balfour, the elder, Adelaide — I think—Adelaide," repeated the boy, desirous to place the fact of his intimacy with the young ladies beyond all question, "created a sensation, I assure you; a great sensation, wherever she went."

"Indeed," observed Balfour, a little annoyed.

"Yes, I assure you . . ." he would have said more, but Dr. Winter, observing that the conversation was not very pleasing to Balfour, came to the rescue by asking the young gentleman, somewhat earlier than he otherwise would have done, to take wine with him.

"It is dreadful," said Mrs. Balfour, addressing herself again to Herbert Grey, "dreadful to think of what may be the fate of all the poor women and children now in Affghanistan, should there be a general rising of the tribes. At such a season, too—in such a country—escape seems almost impossible. Oh! how sad it is," she repeated, "how sad—mothers with their tender infants!"

Never was sympathy more genuine expressed with glistening eyes and faltering voice; sweet eyes—sweet voice—those most excellent things in women. Herbert Grey had always admired Mrs. Balfour; he now felt that, high as had been his estimate of her character, he had never over-rated her true womanly gentleness—her sympathising kindliness of heart.

He did all that he could (it was very little) to dis-

sipate the sadness which had fastened on her heart;—endeavoured to assure her that no intelligence had yet been received of a nature sufficiently alarming to warrant the fears with which she was oppressed. He spoke of the probability of the rising being only a partial rising—of the want of unity among the tribes. He said that the movement, in all probability, was not a national movement; that none of the most influential chiefs had as yet appeared upon the scene; that British influence was still strong in Affghanistan—the prestige of our name still powerful to preserve tranquillity in the country, and to uphold the new dynasty;—that since the capture of Dost Mahommed, the Affghans had been without a head; and that at the very worst, a few engagements, in which our disciplined troops would certainly be victorious, would bring the present insurrection—if it were worthy of such a name—to a satisfactory conclusion; and convince the Affghans that nothing was to be gained by throwing down the gauntlet of defiance.

Herbert Grey was a sensible man—a well-read man—a travelled man. Few were better acquainted than he with the history, the geography, the national characteristics of all the countries of the East. Of the war in Affghanistan—of its probable consequences—of the position of the British army in that perilous country—he had, in common with all intelligent men in India, thought much—thought deeply. He could not, therefore, help feeling that much which he advanced in favour of the probability of the present movement being one insignificant in itself, and unimportant in its consequences, would not bear a very strict scrutiny.

He knew too much of the national character, of the political institutions, the moral tone, and the religious feelings of the people, really to think that there was nothing of a perilous nature in the condition of affairs beyond the Indus. But he knew at the same time what might be, what often was advanced "on the other side," and this he set forth, with as much ingenious logic as he could call to his assistance, with the benevolent desire of dissipating the fears of the interesting woman who sat by his side.

The effort, too, was partially successful. Mrs. Balfour rose from the dinner-table in better spirits than she had felt when she entered the room; but still the weight was not wholly removed from her heart. She thought of Adela Balfour—she thought of Arthur Carrington—she thought of all the helpless women and children in Affghanistan;—and of these it was very difficult to think without some measure of alarm.

When the ladies quitted the drawing-room, the conversation became more general. It turned, as a matter of course, upon the recent news from Affghanistan. Captain Prior, the diplomatist, who was thoroughly well acquainted with the whole line of country from the banks of the Indus to the shores of the Caspian, was referred to by more than one of the party, for his opinion of the present aspect of affairs; but he was somewhat unnecessarily reserved, and beyond a little geographical information relative to the passes between Caubul and Jullalabad, he seemed determined to impart nothing to his companions. Captain Palus, on the other hand, was full of opinions, and quite willing to

express them. He had also served in Affghanistan, and being an excellent linguist, had conversed freely with the inhabitants of the country, and endeavoured to penetrate the recesses of popular feeling. He had too many theories of his own, he was too much hampered with foregone conclusions, and was too prone to put leading questions, and fashion the evidence of all, whom he examined, in the mould of his own preconceived sentiments, to be, under ordinary circumstances, a very impartial judge; but it so happened that in the present instance, his opinions were not very far wrong, his conclusions not very unsound; and, although he worked out his peculiar theories with a somewhat stronger hand than was necessary—though there was some exaggeration in his views—there was truth at the bottom of much that he advanced.

"The fact is," he said, "do what we may, we shall never make the Affghans an orderly people, according to our English notions of order. We think a vast deal of an ordinary insurrection; they think nothing of it. It is natural in their country that every now and then, and every here and there, swords should be crossed and blood should be shed. An Affghan monarch takes but little account of these recreations. He rather congratulates himself upon them, especially if they are at a distance. He is never so unreasonable as to expect to rule over a country as placid as though the people were all shepherds."

"You are right," said Dr. Winter, "in Affghanistan a periodical insurrection is as necessary to the health of the nation, as a periodical attack of gout

is to the well-being of some constitutions. It is well that the 'peccante humoures,' as some old writer calls them, should be thrown out."

"Yes," rejoined Captain Palus, "it is necessary, and Affghan nature must undergo a radical change before it can exist without an occasional disturbance. Now these disturbances, I say, are matters of little moment in Affghanistan—matters of course—the people cannot live without them; and as no sovereign has ever ruled without them, they are of little consequence in their effects upon the stability of the government. The empire of a Mahomedan monarch is not an empire of opinion. The empire of the British power is. An insurrection damages us. If we suffer a discomfiture, however small, in the field, it is a heavy blow, and great discouragement. We lose the prestige of invincibility, and that invincibility is every thing to us."

"Yes," said Herbert Grey, "we are not unlike Humpty-Dumpty, in the old nursery rhyme:

"'Humpty-Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty-Dumpty had a great fall,
All the king's horses and all the king's men,
Couldn't get Humpty-Dumpty up again.'"

"An apt illustration," rejoined Palus, laughing. "Now the Affghans happen to be the very reverse of Humpty-Dumpty. They are marvellously elastic. When they fall, they are not smashed, like an egg; they bound up again, like a ball of Indian rubber. We may disperse their bands of armed men, but we cannot break their spirit. They will give us some work to do, you may be sure; and with our small force in Affghanistan, our

many isolated posts, our petty detachments, stuck down here and there, at the mercy of the population, we must expect at least some disasters."

"The truth is," said Dr. Winter, "that we have been too long in Affghanistan. So long as we were regarded as mere brief sojourners in the country, the Affghans, whom we alarmed for a while by our undoubted prowess in the field, were contented to regard our presence among them with dogged silence. They expected that we should soon turn our backs upon our protegé, and then, if the old Shah did not suit them, why, it was easy enough to depose him. But when they saw our British officers building houses, making gardens, and sending for their wives, they said: 'Here are the Kaffires, coming to live among us . . . where will all this end?' "

"It would have been well," said the diplomatist, "if the British officers had only sent for . . . ." there he stopped. He was about to divulge something . . . and something awkward too . . . about to express an opinion; so he screwed up his mouth, and was silent for the rest of the evening.

Not so Captain Palus, who resumed: "We mistook altogether the national character of the Affghans, or rather we never troubled ourselves to study their character at all. We experimentalised upon them from the beginning, as though they had been Bengalees. The truth is that the idea of restoring the integrity of Affghanistan, of bringing all the tribes under one common ruler, a sovereign really to be regarded as such, one exacting unqualified loyalty from all, and golden tokens of that loyalty, payable, without demur, on

demand . . . the idea, I say, was preposterously absurd. The institutions of the Affghans are essentially anti-monarchical. We lost sight of one very important fact . . . one which ought not to have escaped the notice of any statesman, that Affghanistan is a hill country. There is nothing more necessary to consider, in these matters, than the physical aspect of the country in which our operations are to be carried on; and that not so much because the physical aspect of the country is in itself a point of vast importance—as I fear we shall too surely be condemned to feel, if our troops be shut up in those tremendous defiles—but because the character of the people is shaped and moulded in accordance with the physical peculiarities of the land which they inhabit. It is no less idle to believe that you can crush a race of hardy mountaineers—breathing an atmosphere of independence—with the same facility as you can set your heel upon the timid phlegmatic dwellers upon the plains—no less idle, I say, to imagine this than to think that you can scourge a tiger as securely as you can lash a cur. It has been said, that the nationality of the Affghans has perished. This I deny. Intestine disorders afford no indications of the extinction of national feeling. Men are not the less bound by common ties, impelled by common motives, stirred by common sympathies, common love, and common hatred, because ever and anon they turn their swords against each other .... but it is not the nationality of the Affghans which presents the most insuperable obstacle to the success of our wild schemes to subjugate these dwellers in the hills ...

It is the patriarchality of the Affghan tribes.... The patriarchal principle....."

"Palus, my good fellow, help yourself and pass the loll-shrab,"* interrupted Herbert Grey, in a state of considerable alarm. The patriarchal principle was the grand hobby of Captain Palus. He rode it sometimes very adroitly; but he was apt to ride it a little too far in the plenitude of his enthusiasm; and though he unquestionably talked well, and all he said had at all events the charm—and a great one it is—of obvious sincerity, he was prone sometimes to become a little dogmatical, and good listeners are rare. The interruption was successful. There was a moment's pause; and Everard Argyle—the Sudder judge—a man of high character and great intellectual attainments, took advantage of it to step in with an interesting parallel between the national character and institutions of the Affghans and those of the Highland clans—a subject which he handled very ingeniously, and as a member of an old Highland family, with a good deal of national pride.

"Snatched out of the very jaws of the patriarchal principle yawning to devour us," said Herbert Grey, in an under tone, to Balfour, who sat next to him. "How lucky that the loll-shrab was before him. It reminds me of what was said of an old French talker—if I mistake not, the Abbé Raynal—when another of equal prowess —Galiani, I think—was standing by:—'*s'il crache, il est perdu*,'—if he stops to spit he is done for. By the way, at what hour do you think the *Southampton* will be up to-morrow?"

* Loll Shrab—red wine, claret.

"Soon after noon, I should think. I shall patiently await her arrival. I shall be alongside the ship as soon as she casts anchor."

"Can I help you in any way?"

"No, thank you, unless you could look in early to-morrow at Burkingyoung's, and tell them to be sure to send home, before twelve o'clock, the new piano I have ordered for my sisters. I fear that I shall not have time, as I must work hard in the morning at office..... No more, thank you"—this to Dr. Winter—"let us rejoin the ladies."

CHAPTER III.

THE ARRIVAL.

"The riches of the ship have come on shore."
Othello.

"LET go the anchor" . . . . and creaking and crashing, grinding and groaning, down went the heavy mass of metal into the bed of the Hooghly River. The voyage is over. The good ship has done its duty well; and four score hearts are stirred with emotion, as the white houses of Calcutta rise up, in all their goodly proportions, before the eyes of the excited gazers. Four score human hearts—and how varied the feelings with which they throb! Four score human hearts! A volume might be filled with pictures of this kaleidoscope of multiform emotion. What a great raree-show is this same heart of man!

A fair scene, indeed, was that which presented itself to the gaze of the passengers—the officers—the crew—who crowded the spacious decks of the *Southampton*. The deep-blue sky—scarcely even a light snowy cloud on its surface—so clear, so bright, so distant. An Indian heaven really does fill the mind with some idea of immensity. It is not a mere painted dome. The clear

azure sky, and the shining waters of the great river; the green banks; the tall masts of the shipping; their stately, many-windowed prows; the boats of every size, of every shape moving from vessel to vessel, or dropping down with the tide; the crowded ghauts on the river side; the carriages passing along the road which skirts it; the wide plain beyond, fenced with its magnificent row of colonnaded white houses; the group of proud buildings nearer the water side; the Government House, an enormous pile of royal dimensions; the Town Hall, the Court House, the government offices—all palaces on a smaller scale; make up a picture which, after the lapse of a hundred days spent in the contemplation of the monotonous sublimity of the ocean, it fills the soul with new delight to contemplate.

The passengers of the *Southampton* were mostly on the poop. Some pacing the deck in a state of undisguised excitement; some viewing distant objects through long telescopes; some affecting *sang froid*, and turning over for the fiftieth time the old newspapers which the pilot had brought on board. Some were imparting information; some receiving it; some were principally engaged in wondering at every thing they saw.

In this latter class—it must be acknowledged, neither a small nor an insignificant one—was a young lady of very striking personal appearance, who sat beneath the awning on the poop, the centre of a little group composed principally of gentlemen. Whatever might be thought of her dress, whatever might be thought of her manners, there was one point concerning which no

question could be raised, there could by no possibility be any difference of opinion, and that was her exceeding beauty. She was very handsomely dressed—all her apparel quite new, all of costly materials, all of fashionable make; a little too gay, perhaps—too striking for those who love the quiet, simple elegance so demonstrative of refined taste; but still, nearer the *distingué* than the *outré* in general style, sufficiently within bounds to escape the censure, though not to excite the admiration, of the critical. Criticism, perhaps, might endeavour to revenge itself upon the unexceptionable face and figure of the girl by taking exception to a shade of colour, a turn or a set not quite faultless in her robe or her head-gear; but this was the most that could be done. And what a face and figure! so much animation, so much grace. A countenance full of vivacity, bright, beaming; full, ruddy lips; large, floating eyes; hair the richest ever seen, glossy brown, and most luxuriant, escaping clusteringly from beneath her bonnet; and a complexion, it almost made you sad to look upon, feeling how very, very soon that charm was destined to fade away beneath the blanching climate of the East.

She was sitting, so that her height was not immediately apparent; but, scanning her figure, you could not fail to see that it was somewhat above the common height; a fine, flowing outline, slender but yet full; the waving line of beauty everywhere. The fall of her shoulders, the set of her head, all exquisite, and as she turned first to one, then to another of the group of gentlemen around her, with a word or a laugh, always

animated, often playful, you could not but admire the grace which accompanied all the movements of Adela Balfour.

She was flushed—excited—in high spirits. It was plain that she was a person almost wholly destitute of reserve. She was talking about her feelings to a knot of half-a-dozen gentlemen, scarcely one of them many years older than herself, and she was but nineteen. Talking of her feelings... She was so glad the voyage was over, and yet she was so sorry... She was quite tired of board-ship, she said, and yet she was sorry to leave it—the dear old ship! she quite loved it, she was quite sure there never was such a dear old ship... Oh! yes, she knew it was the *Southampton's* first voyage, but still it was a dear old ship! No one should deprive her of the pleasure of calling it by that name. And she was really at Calcutta... What did she think of it?... Oh! she thought it was very beautiful, and yet it disappointed her... she was not quite sure that she did think it so very beautiful; she was by no means certain that she should like it. That was Chowringhee, was it? That was where her brother lived. Could any body show her her brother's house? How stupid they all were... No one knew... Was it anywhere near that tall pillar? She must go down to the captain and ask him to come on deck to point out her brother's house. The captain was in his cabin, ill. How provoking of him at such a time, just when she wanted him to point out her brother's house... Ah! there was a boat coming off. She was sure it must be her brother... nobody should tell her that there were only natives in the

boat; or, perhaps, the man in the turband was one of her brother's servants. She was sure he was bringing a letter. . . Ah! she knew how it was, her brother was ill, or he was absent from Calcutta. . . some stupid business. . . and no one would come and fetch her. . . it always happened so provokingly. . . Ah! there was a carriage. . . two, three carriages on the road. She was sure one of them would stop opposite the ship. . . Would any body lend her a telescope? There was a gentleman in a cabriolet, and if they only gave her a good glass she felt certain that she could recognise her brother even at that distance. She had not seen him for many years, but she was quite sure she should know him. Ah! now, there really was a gentleman coming off from the shore, with one or two servants with him, one with a broad belt and shining breast-plate; there was a carriage, too, waiting on the shore. . . That really must be her brother; and a lady, too—she was sure that was Mrs. Balfour, and such a nice boat, too, like a gondola. Did they call them gondolas in Calcutta? No. Well *that* must be her brother. [The lady had gone into the cabin, the gentleman still on deck, one of the servants holding a large umbrella over his head.] . . . There now. . . she could see him quite plainly. . . . was it her brother? . . . Yes. . . . No. She was so agitated. . . . this suspense was quite dreadful. There now, the boat was close beside them. She saw the gentleman quite plainly. It was not her brother. Her brother was so much rosier, so much stouter than that thin, pale man. She was certain it was not her brother.

The thin, pale man had ascended the accommodation-

ladder, and made his bow to the good ship. The chief officer was at the gang-way; and presently, aided by the two gentlemen, a lady stepped upon deck. They walked straight into the cuddy. Adela wondered whose friends they were; said she thought the lady was rather pretty; that the gentleman looked ill—thought it very provoking that other people's friends should come before hers—was afraid that her friends would not come at all. She was almost inclined to cry.

And so she went on, from one inconsistency to another, laughing and pouting—hoping and despairing—wondering and complaining—contradicting herself every minute; whilst the gentlemen by whom she was surrounded, pleased, fascinated, and yet not wholly disinclined to ridicule her, endeavoured each in turn to allay her fears, to deprecate her wrath, and to draw forth smiles of gratitude and approbation.

In the meantime another fair young girl was sitting alone in her cabin—the stern-cabin on the lower deck of the *Southampton*. She was very unlike the brilliant beauty who sat beneath the poop-awning. Unlike in face, in figure, in demeanour, and in attire. Shorter and slighter than Adela Balfour, and far more simply clad, she was altogether much less striking; and by most people would she have been considered much less beautiful. But if there was less to admire, there was more to love. Hers was a lovely countenance. There was no brilliancy of complexion—nothing very perfect in the outline of her face. She had no luxuriant, clustering hair, no magnificent dark blue eyes. You

might have passed her by in a crowded assembly, without taking note of her attractions. But still there was something inexpressibly loveable in her sweet face—a face which, to use a familiar term, "grew upon you" more and more, the longer you looked into it. The mildest eyes—a soft hazel—the gentlest, most endearing smile; her sleek brown hair, parted over her serene forehead; nothing could have surpassed the prevailing expression of womanly goodness which breathed from her face. Placid, thoughtful, almost of a saint-like aspect, and yet in nowise cold or stately, she seemed to those who knew how to estimate such qualities, the very perfection of true gentleness, a creature born to bless and to be blessed.

She was sitting on a couch—a book resting on her knees—her bonnet and gloves lying beside her. She had read but little—her eyes wandered across the page—but very indistinct accounts of what they had taken in did they render up to her brain. Mary Balfour, after all, was not quite a philosopher. She could sit in her cabin at such a time, because she thought it was the fittest place for her; but she could not fix her attention for two minutes together, even upon one of Miss Austin's novels. . . .

A knock at the door. . . . Mary Balfour rose. "Come in," she said, very faintly. She heard the chief officer say something—what she knew not, but she thought, through all her agitation, she could catch the word "Brother."—Yes, "Brother," and then the door opened, and in walked a lady and a gentleman. A

lady and a gentleman—the very persons whom Adela Balfour had seen, with a feeling of disappointment, a feeling of envy, cross the quarter-deck a minute before.

"Edmund!" . . . "Mary!" . . . "Ellen!" . . . . "My dear girl!" . . . "So happy to feel that you are safe. . . ." "What joy to be with my dear, kind brother and sister. . . " Little was said, for some minutes, and that little somewhat incoherently. . . . There was so much genuine feeling . . . so much real pleasure. They were quite silent, Mary sitting between Mr. and Mrs. Balfour, one hand between her brother's, one hand between her sister's, looking with swimming eyes first into the face of one, then into the face of the other, when Adela burst into the cabin, and running up to the couch, threw her arms round her brother's neck. She was all ecstacy—all excitement . . . and she had no lack of words to express the feelings which bubbled up within her.

And it was her brother, after all; how stupid!—she said, not to know him at first sight . . . to think it possible that anybody could be off from the shore before her dear brother. . . . She ought to have known better; she should never forgive herself for the mistake. To be sure, he was very much altered—there was that excuse; still she was so vexed with herself . . . it was so very stupid. (And here for the first time she took some notice of Mrs. Balfour, who, although in a measure prepared for it, was rather startled by the very strong contrast between the demeanour of the two sisters.) And so very stupid, too, not to have recognised her sister, who was not so much altered . . . and the

dear little children, how were they? . . . why had they not come with their mamma? The sweet pets . . . how she should love them. . . . Yes, she was quite determined to spoil them. . . . She should never be able to make enough of her little nieces. . . . How nice it would be. . . . They had had a very pleasant voyage, but were very glad it was over. Many of the passengers were such delightful people. . . . She would introduce her brother to them all. . . . Many had promised to call upon her . . . and she was engaged, she knew not how many deep, for the ball, which, they had seen in the papers, was to come off next week. It was so delightful. . . . Nothing could exceed the attention she had received. . . . She was sure that she should like India. . . . Couldn't think how people could call it too hot. . . . It was not too hot at all, especially early in the morning. . . . Indeed she thought it was rather cold. And then she turned suddenly round to her brother, and asked where was Arthur Carrington.

Mr. Balfour said, that there had not been sufficient time yet allowed for Carrington's arrival at the Presidency—that he had warned her not to expect him so soon. All this was of no avail. Adela was quite sure that he would come—indeed, that he must have come already; it was not possible that he should delay. She knew him better than to doubt for a moment, that he would have set off immediately, on learning that she was on her way to Calcutta . . . . How could she have any misgivings?—Oh! no—every one who knew Carrington must feel certain that he would start immediately. It would be quite unlike him, if he were to allow an hour's delay.

Balfour suggested, that the distance of Caubul from Calcutta was very great...he added, besides, that military duty might have detained the young officer.

"Distance," exclaimed Adela... "Oh! Edmund... how little do you know Arthur—how little can you know of love ... distance would be nothing to him... Oh! he will be here, I am sure... and then you talk about duty... what are all duties in comparison to the duty he owes to me?"

"I do not doubt," said Balfour, "that he will be among us, as soon as ever it is possible for him to quit the country and accomplish the journey. The distance necessarily causes some uncertainty, dear. We will hope for the best. But even lovers," he added, cheerfully, "cannot achieve impossibilities."

Adela sighed—every thing was against her. She always had been unfortunate—always, from a little child. She should end life as she began it: everything was against her.

Mary bent her sweet eyes upon her sister... almost was there a look of reproach in her gentle face. After all that their brother had done for them, it did seem so ungrateful to talk in such a strain as this. But Balfour was not hurt. He pitied Adela more than he blamed her. She had assuredly very much to bear The subject which they had touched upon was a painful one; so he made an effort to change it. Rising from the couch, he asked Mary if she had set aside such portion of their baggage, as they wished immediately to be removed to the shore, and having received an answer in the affirmative, he began, causing as much bustle as he could all the while, to make

arrangements for its removal to the boat, which was waiting alongside of the vessel.

In less than a quarter of an hour, the Balfours were on their way to the Ghaut, beside which the carriage was waiting for their reception. Of all the party, Adela was the most vivacious. She had something to say about every thing. No one would have suspected her to be the most unfortunate creature in the world. She was in ecstacies at the sight of all the houses—especially of Government House; was sure it must contain such beautiful ball-rooms; would there be any balls there soon? She had heard so much on board of the grand entertainments at Government House.... And then the dust—oh! the horrid dust! Was it always so dusty?—she was sure that she should not be able to live a week in Calcutta, if it were... She hated dust...what would become of all her beautiful new things? A white veil, it was very certain would be ruined in a single morning. Why did they not have water-carts... How could the people of Calcutta live in such a state of dust?

Mary said little... but nothing escaped her observation. She was interested in all that she saw. Every thing was so new to her... and it was so strange to be surrounded by people of a different colour, of a different creed, speaking another language, and bowing down to other gods. Was it possible that she, in her limited sphere, could work any—the least good, among all these poor people? She asked herself the question again and again; and she determined soon to put it to others more competent to render an answer.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SISTERS.

"A clear stream flowing by a muddy one."

Tennyson.

Unreasonable girls, indeed, must Adela and Mary Balfour have been, if they had not been more than satisfied with the arrangements, which their generous brother had made for their reception. Every comfort, every luxury was placed within their reach. Their apartments were not only elegantly furnished; they were furnished with the most thoughtful care, by one who, with the intuitive apprehension—the ready kindness of woman, anticipated every possible want, and divined every possible means of affording surprise and pleasure to her guests. Opening into their spacious, airy sleeping apartment, was a most delightful boudoir, fitted up most elaborately with every convenience that could render it a pleasant retreat for the sisters, during those hours of the day, which ladies, especially during the summer-heats, are wont to spend in their own apartments. Couches—and writing-tables... writing tables, furnished with so much taste, and so plenteously provided—easy chairs, and book-shelves well-stored with

careful selections from Balfour's excellent library . . . pictures and portfolios—ay, and a little painting table . . . and above all, a handsomely carved piccolo piano, with a Canterbury beside it full of music. The windows of the room opened on a wide verandah, commanding an extensive view of the great plain, the river, and the city of Calcutta.

Mrs. Balfour had conducted the girls to their apartments. She hoped that they would find every thing they wanted. She had secured the services of a native ayah—a trustworthy woman, well acquainted with her business—to wait upon the young ladies; but as they might at first find some difficulty in making themselves understood, she had desired her own European maid to render them additional assistance. Luncheon would soon be ready—would they come down to it, or would they have it served in their own rooms? They might take their own time . . . there was no occasion for any hurry . . . and then, interrupting a torrent of thanks from Adela, and exchanging with Mary a glance of kindly intelligence—a glance which told that already they had learnt to understand and to appreciate each other—Mrs. Balfour quitted the room.

Adela was in ecstasies . . . such a delightful room . . . every thing in such exquisite taste . . . it was really so kind of Edmund! . . she had not expected this . . . she remembered, that when a little girl, she had been rather afraid of him; she did not feel at all afraid of him now. What a love of a writing-table! . . there was one for each . . . both so pretty, it was hard to know which to choose . . . and what a comfortable couch—just the sort

of couch to read novels upon . . . she hoped Edmund had plenty of novels . . Oh' she must try it. (Throwing off her bonnet, taking a book from one of the shelves, stretching herself upon the sofa, and crossing her pretty feet.) There, it would be so pleasant to read—but not such books as that, "The Daughters of England" . . . Oh! she would leave that for Mary . . . she could not think why people wrote such books as those; nobody could wish to read them . . . she was sure, for her part, that she should fall asleep over the first chapter . . . and then, that piano (starting up), it was so pretty . . . she wondered whether it was well-toned . . . it looked quite new . . . there (running her fingers over the notes), she thought she could sing to it —And she began, in what was certainly a very fine, voice, to sing the first verse of "Isle of Beauty."

She did not proceed any further than the first verse.

"It makes me quite sad," she said, closing the piano, "to sing that song. . . . Do you remember how miserable poor Arthur was—, that last night, when he sang it . . . . I don't think, I shall ever hear it again without feeling so wretched . . . . What can have become of Arthur, Mary?—Did you not think it very foolish of Edmund to say that Arthur could not be here . . . . I am quite sure he must be here . . . . at all events, not very far off . . . . Don't look, in that way, Mary . . . . Mrs. Balfour—I don't quite feel as though I could call her Ellen just yet—looked in that way, when I said I was quite sure he would come . . . . I think you are something like Mrs. Balfour . . . . What do you think of her?"

"Oh, I am quite sure that I shall love her very much," said Mary.

"Do you? I don't much think that *I* shall even like her," said Adela. "I'm sure she must be very serious. She looks so; and then I hear that she never goes to balls. I suppose she has not learnt to dance. She was brought up in what the advertisements call 'a pious family.'"

"Adela!"

"Don't look so serious. We shall hear soon that *you* do not approve of balls. Oh, I do cordially hate such methodistical notions. I hope there is not very much of this sort of thing in India. I shall die of it if there is. Mr. Lorimer quite agrees with me. He was always talking against the saints. No fear of his becoming one. I am to dance my first dance with him. I hope he will call to-morrow."

Mary did not say what she thought, but perhaps she looked it, for Adela resumed:—"I don't see why you should dislike Mr. Lorimer, he is so gentlemanly, so good-looking; and I am sure he is very amusing. He is so good-natured, too, especially when he is quizzing; and he does say the drollest things."

Mary did not quite recognise the good-nature of saying ill-natured things; but as she did not wish to prolong the discourse on the merits of Mr. Lorimer, she held her peace, and merely remarked:—"I am quite sure that you will like Ellen very much, when you know her better. You wrong her, I think, if you suppose that there is any thing morose in her nature. She is

unaffectedly good, makes no parade of religion; we shall find her very indulgent."

But Adela did not stand in need of any body's indulgence. It was time enough for others to be indulgent when she did wrong. She did not see what Mrs. Balfour or any body else had to do with indulgence towards her. Indulgence!—she could not bear the word. It supposed an immense amount of superiority; it implied forbearance on one side, criminality on the other. Mrs. Balfour might keep her indulgence for those who wanted it. She did not.

Mary hoped that they might never want it—that they might never stand in need of any body's indulgence.

"Oh, I don't pretend—far from it," said Adela, "to be better than other people. I am not perfect—never shall be. Mr. Lorimer tells me that I am; but I always laugh at his flattery. I wonder whether Edmund will ask Mr. Lorimer to dinner."

"Perhaps, if he calls on our brother—that is, if it is the custom to do so."

"Oh, he is sure to call—quite sure," said Adela, eagerly; "at least, he is quite sure to call upon *me*. Sure, if it were only to pay me the gloves which I won of him, in the bet about the day of our arrival . . . Oh! I do so wish that dear Arthur were here; he would like Mr. Lorimer so much. They would suit each other, I am sure, excellently—both so amusing, so good-natured; they would be such friends. Dear Arthur—how I wish he were here! What did they say about letters? They have got letters from him. Oh! why

—why have they kept me so long without them? I . . ." and in an instant she was rushing down stairs as fast as her little feet could carry her.

Mary followed; but before she entered the drawing-room Adela had gained possession of a letter, which she was devouring with extreme avidity. It was from Arthur Carrington, written in the middle of September . . . written, too, in high spirits. It spoke of the approaching return of his regiment to the provinces, said that it would march early in October; that as soon as it crossed the frontier, he should obtain leave of absence, and come down as fast as he could, travelling day and night by dawk. He hoped to reach the Presidency early in November.

"There," cried Adela, kissing the letter again and again. "I knew he would come—I knew he would be here. Early in November he says; he must be here, in Calcutta; or if not arrived yet, he must be close at hand. Mrs. Balfour . . . Ellen . . . do you not think he is here?"

"If he were in Calcutta, dear," said Mrs. Balfour with a sweet smile, "he would be in this drawing-room, I am sure. I hope he is not far off—that is, not very. But we must not expect him till he comes. . . Shall we go down to tiffin."

They went . . . Adela was full of questions—how far was it to Caubul . . . how far from Caubul to the provinces . . . what did Arthur mean by the provinces?—how many miles a day could he travel . . . was it difficult to get leave of absence . . . did not her brother think it possible that Mr. Carrington might arrive to-morrow?

Whilst Balfour was answering these and many other

questions, Mary was thoughtfully putting one or two to his wife. . . . They related to the possibility of European ladies in India rendering themselves useful auxiliaries in the great work of reforming the natives of the country. Did they accomplish any thing—or did they leave every thing to the men? The answer, rendered with a sigh, elicited another in response.

CHAPTER V.

HOUSE-HOLD CHARITIES.

> "There is a comfort in the strength of love,
> 'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
> Would over-set the brain, or break the heart."
>
> *Wordsworth.*

THE thoughts and feelings which filled the brain and stirred the heart of Edmund Balfour, during the next few days, were of a mingled—a conflicting character. Sometimes cheerful, sometimes depressed; sometimes sanguine, sometimes desponding; sometimes serene and sometimes agitated; he passed rapidly from one state to another—and that not without some good reason; though, perhaps, the very unsettled state of his health (he was a great sufferer) had something to do with this uncertainty. It was, perhaps, fortunate for him that he was engaged, and that in no careless, slovenly manner, at office during the greater part of the day, and that being a most conscientious and most indefatigable public servant—one, too, who worked hard, not only because he felt it was a duty to his employers to do so, but because, with a more enlarged sense of his obligations as a servant of the government, he deemed it a duty to the country—a duty to the people, in whose condition he was deeply

interested, to exert himself to the utmost in their cause—he had little time when at office to think of private affairs. He held an important situation—one that demanded the exercise of a high order of intelligence; the one of all others, perhaps, best adapted to the tastes and talents of Balfour, but at the same time one which, filling his mind, conferred no great benefit on his body. He was obviously breaking down under hard work—hard work in office, hard work out of office; for there were few men in Calcutta who took more interest in, or devoted more time to the many philanthropic institutions established in India—but though suffering under a chronic malady, which allowed him never to be really well, and the ravages of which were plainly perceptible in his pale face and attenuated form, he had, for some time, been free from any acute attacks; and so long as he felt himself competent, though at any cost of physical inconvenience, to perform with mental energy his accustomed duties, he turned a deaf ear to the solicitations of those anxious friends, who had for some time observed with pain his wasted appearance, and had strenuously advised him to seek in change of air and recreation, the only remedy, which, in his condition, could restore him to a state bordering upon health.

The expected arrival of his sisters had been to him a source of considerable anxiety—anxiety, which their safe location in his house had not altogether dissipated. Something of what, in moments of nervous depression, he had anticipated, had actually come to pass. It was very obvious that his sister Adela had not

conducted herself, during the voyage, with any great amount of discretion. She had been foolish, giddy, too familiar with her fellow-passengers—had not sufficiently considered her position, or the liability of having even an innocent freedom of manner misunderstood by an ignorant, and misconstrued by a spiteful world. It was impossible not to read all this in Adela's own account of the voyage, confirmed not by any thing which fell from the lips of Mary, but by the expression of distress which sometimes her sweet countenance wore, when allusions were made to certain people or certain circumstances, prominent in the history of the voyage. But then, on the other hand, he had found in Mary a treasure beyond all price. Every day, every hour developed some new excellence in her character, and strengthened his conviction that her presence would make an immense addition to the solid stock of domestic comfort with which he was blest. Household happiness had been to Balfour almost the only prop, which had sustained him beneath the depressing influences of constant ill-health. He must have sunk beneath the assaults of the climate but for this support. It is true that the sense of his usefulness in the country filled him with intellectual energy, inspired him with new hopes, new desires, and kept him manfully to the work which, with God's help, he designed to achieve; but it was the repose of domestic life—the certain happiness which he possessed at *home*—the placid enjoyment which, absent or present, he derived from the conviction, that, in his domestic relations, he was blest beyond the common lot of men, that come what might he had ever *this* to fall

back upon—that supplied the only constant sustaining power which enabled him to preserve his equilibrium—to resist, in some measure, the assaults made upon the frail, decaying flesh, which encased his vigorous spirit. Other pleasures were but temporary stimulants; this was an enduring consolation. It was impossible to say how much—how often he hugged the precious thought to his heart. It is true that he had not wholly escaped those sufferings which are common to European parents in India. Death had crossed his door-step, had invaded his nursery—whose nursery does it not invade? His wife, too, had more than once been prostrated by sickness, in its most alarming form, and often had he trembled for her safety. These trials, acting upon an excitable frame, much weakened by the exhausting effects of the climate, had inflicted many a severe shock upon his constitution; but after all, what were these sufferings when weighed against the store of happiness which was ever garnered up beneath his roof?

And now it seemed to him that this store was about to be increased. Perhaps, at the same time that great additions were being made, there were also some abatements to be taken into account; but the balance on the whole was in his favour. Even Adela, though she occasioned him some alarm, was often a source to him of increased satisfaction. Like most sensitive men, Balfour was somewhat vain. He was not personally vain; his vanity was not of that lowest order—he was not vain of his person; nor of his abilities, nor of his social position. But he was vain, so to speak, in his affections. He was vain of his wife—of his children; anxious that they

should be admired; never so happy as when he knew that they were admired. He troubled himself little about his own dress, but he took great interest in his wife's; more than she, on her own account, was inclined to take—more, perhaps, than she considered altogether right. And this feeling, too, was not a mere reflection of selfishness. It was not with him as it is with many vain and selfish men, that he desired his wife to be admired, because she was his—a part of his establishment. It was in reality because he loved her. And thus also it came to pass that he took the most elaborate pains to furnish and decorate his house with becoming taste; to scatter everywhere evidences of refinement; to give a general aspect of propriety to all his domestic arrangements. His equipages were the most complete, the best appointed in Calcutta; his dinner-parties the most *recherchés.* Every thing in his house bore the stamp of an elegant and accomplished mind. It was his delight that all of this should be attributed, as it was—and in a great measure justly too—to the presiding intelligence of Mrs. Balfour. When alone, he cared nothing for these things. It was rather his pleasure that there should be something wanting; that the apparent deficiencies should be attributed to the absence of his wife .... and once she had been absent for some months, compelled by dangerous illness to seek change of air. It was not, therefore, the gross vanity of self. It was the vanity of the affections.

And now that his sisters had arrived, it delighted him to find that they were lovely, accomplished girls—that everywhere they were greatly admired. Every

one was talking about the Miss Balfours. Every one anxious to see them. Adela was certainly the most beautiful girl, that, for some years, had been seen in Calcutta. This was the universal verdict. Mary did not, at first, excite so much admiration; but Balfour knew well that in a little time her gentle qualities would gather around her a multitude of friends. All this was pleasing to Balfour; and when, on returning from office in the evening, he received from his wife an account of all the little events of the day, with a list—a long one it was—of the morning visiters, he felt a proud satisfaction in the thought, that there was not another roof in Calcutta which sheltered so many and so worthy objects of admiration and love.

And then it so happened, that the intelligence received from the countries beyond the Indus, was of a less mournful complexion than that which reached the Presidency on the day which saw the arrival of the *Southampton*. Sale, with his small band of stout hearts and sturdy arms, had fought his way step by step through the passes; worsted the enemy in more than one engagement; and moved down upon Jullalabad. Though the passes were still closed on the other side, it was not supposed that any thing of a disastrous character had occurred at Caubul, nor indeed, at that time, had any thing disastrous occurred. No very serious alarm was felt in Calcutta. It was thought that there would be some more fighting; but as no one ever doubted, that success would crown every engagement with the barbarian foe, this excited no great apprehension in the breast of society at large. A few

prepared themselves for the worst; but the general feeling appeared to be that it was merely a transitory thunder-cloud.

Balfour, whatever may have been his own secret convictions, determined, outwardly at least, to recognise nothing perilous in the condition of affairs. He spoke lightly of the disturbances which had taken place; and Adela, who had recovered from the first shock of disappointment—disappointment which but for her own most unreasonable expectations she would never have experienced at all—regarded the movements as mere matters of course, which, for any thing she knew to the contrary, might always have been going on. She expressed no alarm, for she felt none; and she was not a person to take pleasure in playing for more than five minutes together the character of a disconsolate. She was always cheerful, always lively. There was much to please—much to excite. Every thing was novel—every thing was charming. She was greatly admired and she appreciated admiration. She had never received so much attention before. It appeared to her that all Calcutta was at her feet—young and old, rich and poor, handsome and plain, clever and stupid, all pressing on to touch the hem of her garment, or to kiss the dust which her little slippers had pressed. There was something in all this very pleasing, very intoxicating; and there were moments in which Adela began to think that she had not acted very wisely in accepting the first offer ever made to her. Time had been when she was proud of a single admirer; and now she had a hundred at her feet. There were so many, that there

was not much fear, at first, of her selecting any one as the object of her especial choice. It was long indeed, before she could remember the names of half the gentlemen who called in the morning, bowed to her on the course, and met her at dinner in the evening. All this was in her favour; and Balfour was pleased to see that in mixed society her behaviour was very good. There was nothing forward—nothing flippant in her demeanour. At times she was almost dignified, perhaps, sometimes, a little cold. As for Mary—her sweetness, her simplicity, her unaffected kindliness of heart, were of the most engaging description. . . . She did not gather a crowd around her; but they, who were fortunate enough to converse with her for a little while, went away with the impression that she realised all their ideas of true womanly gentleness—a very embodiment of feminine perfection.

If there were any one of her many admirers to whom Adela showed a decided preference, it was Mr. Lorimer—a young civilian, who had been one of her fellow-passengers. A good-humoured, amusing, rattling youth, he had paid her a great deal of unmeaning attention during the voyage. He had copied music for her, written nonsense in her album, and paid her a vast number of compliments. He knew that she was engaged to be married, and that, therefore, he might amuse himself with impunity. He incurred no risk; he could not be misunderstood. Adela being very good-natured, and by no means overburdened with prudery, had received the young man's attentions at first with civility, and then even with a slight show of

pleasure. She had once, on his account, permitted his familiarity; she subsequently encouraged it on her own. Kindness at first; afterwards selfishness. The young man amused her, and on board-ship it was something to be amused. There could be no harm in laughing. It was dull enough any how on board-ship. It would have been insupportable without pleasant friends to help the time to pass glibly by. Surely there was no occasion for her to sit erect on her chair, to close her lips demurely, to walk only on one side of the deck, like other young misses. And what right had the captain—what right had her brother's old friends, the Blenkinsons, to endeavour to control her—to throw out disagreeable hints? It might have been all very well for Mary . . . but she —a married woman almost . . . she knew how to take care of herself.

It was well that all this ended in nothing worse than it really did. Adela had great notions of independence; and as she often made a merit of what other people considered in no wise meritorious, she generally cut a worse figure in her own accounts, than in other people's accounts, of herself. Her self-portraiture, whatever she may have thought about it, was in reality by no means flattering. To Balfour this conviction was consolatory. It is true that some little scandal, emanating from the passengers of the *Southampton*, had been in circulation, but it had not reached his ears; and, after all, there always is scandal, and, the chances being, as every one knows, in favour of the falsehood of every report circulated to one's discredit, no very great harm is done to the reputation of the party assailed. There

is so much of it, that in the *mêlée*, almost every one escapes uninjured. "Be ye as pure as snow, as chaste as ice, ye shall not escape calumny." You may be much purer, much chaster than either, and yet not escape calumny in Calcutta.

The worst part of the matter was that young Lorimer, being a little vain, and very inexperienced, did not feel any great disinclination to talk about his intimacy with the beautiful Adela. He had not been many days on shore before he found that every one was talking about the Miss Balfours. They were the observed of all observers; and he felt that to be admired by one so much admired as Adela, was a gay and flaunting feather in his cap, which it was worth his while to make the most of. Oh! yes, he knew the Miss Balfours—were they not sweet girls? Adela especially; so good-natured, so amusing, so much to say for herself. There was no prudery—no humbug about her. . . . He did not know Mary Balfour quite so well . . . but Adela, he might say that he knew her . . . that he was in fact very intimate with her . . . that he had enjoyed excellent opportunities of becoming acquainted with her character . . . that he had, indeed, seen more of her than any one else on board-ship . . . that she was a very pleasant companion, and, in short, that they suited each other very well. And all this the youth, in his childish vanity, accompanied with looks and gestures, which were intended to convey even more than his words.

Young Lorimer, a member of a good family, a member, too, of the most aristocratic class of Indian society, the bearer of many really useful letters of introduction,

found ready entrance to those very circles in which the Balfours moved. It has been said that good looks are the best letters of introduction in the world. Harry Lorimer, wherever he went, carried these letters with him. He was clever too—entertaining; perhaps a little forward, but this did not stand much in his way; and as his manners were open, frank, and, on the whole, pleasing, he soon found himself at home in some of the best houses in Calcutta.

Poor Balfour! The new Macaulay article he was condemned to read in his carriage, by small instalments, on his way to and from office. The leisure evening so long looked for was not to be found. The arrival of his sisters had brought down upon him a flood of engagements. The first evening or two, spent at home, he had devoted to the girls . . . he had listened delightedly to their singing, and inspected Mary's portfolio with no less pleasure. Adela was a finished performer on the piano, and she sang with great execution . . . elaborately —artistically—with, perhaps, rather too much of a professional air about it. Mary, on the other hand, sang very quietly—very simply. She never attempted anything of an elaborate or a fantastic character. She did not *perform*. There was something very unassuming, but very touching in her style. It was so natural . . . so easy. . . . If it did not ravish the ear, it went straight to the heart. She delighted in the simple ballad music of the British isles; and no one ever conveyed the sentiment of the piece she was singing with more truthfulness of pathos, or of gaiety, to her hearers, for no one ever felt more deeply the significance of the words she

uttered. Sound did not overlay sense. Adela's singing was all sound.

Very pleasant were these few evenings at home, and Balfour sighed as his wife recounted to him one afternoon the long string of invitations she had received, adding that she was almost afraid they would be compelled to give a series of entertainments themselves.

"I suppose we must," he said; "there is no use in sighing over it; so let us reconcile ourselves to the infliction, as best we may. Not," he added, "that I care so much about giving as about receiving. I like seeing people at my table—especially as my little wife does the honours so well . . . but to go out evening after evening, when one would so much rather be sitting comfortably at home . . . reading or talking, or listening to Mary's singing—I wish I could add, and yours . . ."

"Oh! I will try now, Edmund. You know I have not been quite equal to singing alone . . . but with Mary . . . I might attempt a second."

"That's right — but now about these parties . . . Adela declares that she will never let me alone until I have given a ball . . ." Mrs. Balfour's face instantly lost all its cheerfulness. . . . "Yes, a ball, my love; but do not look so grave about it . . . the drawing-room, you know, is boarded . . . it is one of the best rooms in Calcutta. I will take care that your writing-table and your ornament-tables are moved with the utmost care . . . there shall be no damage done. And we will call at Madame Gervaine's to-morrow morning . . . and she shall make you the prettiest, the lightest, the most fan-

tastic ball-dress in the world . . . and Spence shall provide the supper . . . and . . ."

"I shall lead off with Dr. Winter . . . shall I not?—ah, Edmund, you are laughing at me."

"Laughing—what else? I fear that if Adela is determined to give me no peace until she extorts a ball from me, I am destined to have very little peace during her sojourn in Calcutta. Well, I must bear my sufferings as manfully as I can. There shall be no ball."

"No one will expect one, Edmund. We never have given balls, and no one will expect one now. We can be abundantly hospitable, I am sure, without inviting our guests to perform antics which, at any other time and place, would entitle the performer to snug quarters in Mr. Beardsmore's Lunatic Asylum. And the girls, too. . . . I am quite sure that they cannot find it dull."

"Impossible . . . with so much gaiety out of doors and every thing so new to them. For my own part, this constant whirl is to me distraction . . . However, it will not last for ever . . . How glad I should be to escape . . . By the bye, I was thinking on my way from office, that during the cold weather, it would be really an excellent plan to take a country house . . . one of the houses at Titaghur . . . there is one, I believe, now empty."

"Oh! I should like it so much," exclaimed Mrs. Balfour, "it would be so good for you . . . so good for the children. I do not know any thing that would do you more good . . . It is precisely what you most require. The drive in and out of town . . . or sometimes

you might go by the river . . . would give you so much more air and exercise, than you now enjoy. It would refresh you so much—I know that I should see less of you; for you would start early and return late . . . but what of that? I should find abundant recompense in the great improvement which it must effect in your health. You want rest . . . you want recreation . . . Oh! let us go, Edmund . . . I am sure that you ought to go."

"But what would Adela say?—I have no fear of Mary—but what would Adela say?"

"Oh! we need not be there altogether," returned Mrs. Balfour,—"we might send a few servants to Titaghur, and could go there whenever we might find the change suitable to our arrangements. Besides, I should have thought that Adela—in her situation—I mean, Edmund, that I should not have imagined that, all things considered, privacy could be so very distasteful to her. I almost wonder that she does not rather wish to withdraw at such a time as this, altogether into retirement."

"And I," said Balfour, "I too . . ." slowly and sadly, "I should have thought so, too, my love . . . It is a pity . . . but as her own feelings do not prompt her to avoid society, what can we say,—what can we do? . . . I think the Titaghur project is a very good one . . . I long for a glimpse of the country—long for a garden . . . We ought to have begun gardening a little earlier; but no matter, I dare say we shall achieve something . . . and the children, it will do them so much good . . ." his spirits seemed to be rising again; "how they would

enjoy themselves, making houses and fortresses of sand in the verandah, or swinging beneath the trees. Besides"... his manner changed a little, he was more serious; "I have been thinking, that, at this time, it would be especially desirable to move the girls from Calcutta—move them beyond the influence of the eternal gossip of the town. They do not read the newspapers..."

"Nay, Edmund, it was only this morning that Mary was studying, most intently, a speech of Dr. Christian's—an account of a Town Hall Meeting—and asking me a world of questions about the speaker and the cause."

"Good girl!—she must know Dr. Christian, she will like him so much, I am sure... We may let her read the papers—she has too much good sense, too much good feeling, for us to have any fear... Besides, she is differently situated. We need conceal nothing from her... Indeed, I doubt not, that we shall find her aid most valuable. But Adela... there may be occasion to keep something of the truth from her... she will hear every thing in Calcutta... On the course, at the dinner-table, in the ball-room... everywhere people are asking 'What is the news from Affghanistan?'"

"Has there been any worse news to-day?"

"There has been no news at all," said Balfour, "at least I have not been able to obtain any, and I have made inquiries in every likely quarter. In this case 'no news' is not 'good news'; I am sorry to say that

it is *bad* news. We must hope for the best; I have been saying this for some time past. It is all that I can say."

Balfour was leaning over the rails of the broad verandah which skirted the front of the house. Calcutta was beginning to pour itself forth again. There was a stream of carriages flowing across the plain. As he looked down upon the animated scene beneath him, his eyes fell upon a capacious barouche, in which sat a solitary old grey-haired man, leaning back, almost doubled up, in one corner of the carriage. Balfour waved his hand in salutation to the old man, who, though his face was towards the house, took no notice of the gesture. "Poor Wilton! lost in thought," soliloquized Balfour—then raising himself and turning towards his wife, he added, "That man has never smiled once since the first tidings of the coming storm in Affghanistan reached him. It is his nature to despond, the poor old man! and with an only son at Caubul, what wonder that he should now be greatly depressed? There are other quaking hearts, I doubt not.... Ah! here comes Herbert Grey."

He had ridden into the compound, as he said, to say a few words to Balfour, who went down stairs to speak to his friend. It was nothing of any kind of importance. He merely wished to ask Balfour if, now that the cold weather was setting in, he did not intend to ride again. Horse exercise, Grey was sure, would do him so much good—it was so much better than sitting in a carriage. That was, indeed, no exercise at all.

Balfour thanked his friend.... He had been thinking

of it—had, indeed, been looking at the new English horses which B— had brought with him in the *Southampton;* but he rather thought he should change his mind. He was not quite sure that horse exercise did agree with him; he was too excitable, too inflammable .... Besides, he had just been entertaining altogether a new idea .... he thought he should take a house in the country ... on the banks of the river—at Titaghur. Then, at least, he should have enough of exercise ... a jolting drive of fifteen miles every day .... and he intended, too, to turn gardener—to dig for an hour every morning .... nothing like digging—nothing so wholesome.

"To Titaghur!" exclaimed Herbert Grey ... his countenance fell—"To Titaghur ... what, are all of you going to leave Calcutta?—All ... All" ....

> "What! all my pretty chickens and their dam,
> At one fell swoop!"—

said Balfour, laughing, "why, what have you got to say against the proposal, my good fellow?"

Balfour did not find it very easy to say any thing against it ... Nothing, indeed, was forthcoming in the way of a reason, except that it was a bore ... a shame—the Balfours could not be spared at such a time. It was really too bad.

"A nice person you," said Balfour, "to come here to give me advice about the preservation of my health, and then to cry out against me, when I tell you that I am thinking of treating myself to a little change of air."

Grey laughed ... "The selfishness of man! ... but

seriously, my dear Balfour, are you going to leave Calcutta?"

"We are thinking of it . . . It is almost settled—It will do you good, my dear fellow, to come and see us sometimes—we shall always have a room for you."

Herbert Grey thanked him—he would be sure to beat up the gardener in his rural retreat, and take a spade with him some day. It would be rare fun to see them in the midst of a December fog, digging up the wet jungle . . . and Mrs. Balfour, and his sisters—did they intend to garden too?

"I have no doubt. I can answer at least for Mary."

Herbert Grey entered into the gardening project with increased cordiality. He was very fond of a garden—always had been. He was not very learned in botany, but he had often thought of studying it. He thought it was really a very good scheme—this visit to Titaghur. He was sure it would do them all good; he should make a point of beating them up very often. Had Balfour secured a good supply of seeds from the Horticultural Society? Grey had received his share; he had been thinking of sending them to Mrs. Torrington, who had a garden at Ballygunje; but now he should keep them all in honour of the Flora of Titaghur. They would make such a noble garden between them. Was Miss Balfour a very cunning botanist? He thought she must be. He thought he remembered her saying something which led him to suppose that she had studied the subject; she would put them all to the blush, he was sure.

Something or other had already put him to the

blush—and not metaphorically. It was but a slight blush—a very faint one—scarcely perceptible, but still it was not lost upon Balfour. A bonnet was visible at the open door. "Here is the lady to answer for herself, Grey."

No—It was not Mary. It was Adela. She was coming out, equipped for the evening drive, to play, for a few minutes, with a gazelle, which was tethered on a plot of grass in the compound. Herbert Grey was obviously disappointed; but, perhaps, he said more than if Mary herself had appeared before him. What he said was of no importance—light—trifling—and Adela soon interrupted him—"Oh! Mr. Grey, I have been wanting to see you so much. I have a question—a very particular question to put to you, and I rely on your answering me in entire good faith. Captain Danvers has a grey Arab horse—a very beautiful Arab; I have seen it on the course; and very quiet, so Captain Danvers says. He wishes me very much to ride it, and has promised to send it here some evening . . . I am sure that I should like to ride it, but I am *so* nervous . . . and what I wish to learn from you, from you, Mr. Grey, for you know Captain Danvers so well—is whether the horse is really quiet . . . Do you think that I might ride it?"

Mr. Grey replied as briefly as possible that he believed the horse was perfectly quiet. Balfour appeared vexed—embarrassed—but he said nothing.

Adela continued, "Oh! I am so glad to hear you say so, Mr. Grey . . . I look upon you as quite an authority . . . I shall not be in the least afraid—and Cap-

tain Danvers says that *Fairy* is sure to behave well, if he rides with me; and Mr. Lorimer insists on riding on the other side."

Balfour was obviously very much annoyed, and Grey observed his annoyance. The latter wishing, if possible, to change the subject, was about ask his friend, if there was any news from Affghanistan, when Mrs. Balfour joined the party beneath the portico. The carriage was standing a little way out-side; the coachman on the box ready to drive in, at a moment's notice. Nothing could have been more opportune than the arrival, at such a moment, of the lady. She had something to say to Herbert about a book she had promised to lend him; and Balfour took advantage of the appearance of his wife, in shawl and bonnet, to say to his sister . . . "Where is Mary?—The carriage is ready; perhaps, Adela dear, you will run up stairs and call her—we are all ready."

Adela soon returned with her sister, who very plainly, but very well dressed, looked charmingly. Herbert Grey, who had not before dismounted, now beckoned to his *syce*, threw the reins upon the neck of his horse, and sprang out of the saddle. He had scarcely touched the ground, before he was sensible that he had made a mistake—a distinction neither polite nor politic. But Mary was glad to see him—answered his questions in a frank, friendly tone, and inquired after a cold of which he had been complaining on the day before. He was more than rewarded. The sense of *gaucherie* is always painful—but this would have soothed any pain. The

carriage drew up and Herbert Grey helped the ladies to enter it; folded the steps and closed the door with his own hands. He had seldom been in such good spirits as, when waving his hand, he cantered off towards the river.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAIDEN'S CHAMBER.

"The maiden's chamber—silken, hush'd, and chaste."
Keats.

TWO nights afterwards—late at night—or rather early in the morning, if day and night be determined not by light and darkness, but by the hands of the dial, the sisters were in that pleasant little, well-stored, well-decorated boudoir, which the kindness of their brother had provided for them. Both were attired in evening costume of white—both in white, but most unlike each other. They had just returned from an evening party; and they were tired. Adela had all that look of disorder and exhaustion—the ruffled, jaded look—which a night in a crowded ball-room not seldom produces in a western climate; and how much more certainly in the East. She had lost more than half her beauty, for her eyes were heavy, her cheeks were pale, her hair was lank and almost curl-less. Her dress, too—one of somewhat elaborate device—had lost much of its ancient glory; its freshness, its delicacy, its style — all had vanished. Mary, on the other hand, was little altered. Her quiet look—her simply-braided hair—her gentle

eyes still as lovely as ever; and her very plain ungarnished dress, so little to spoil, so little to disorder, was as chaste—as neat, as when her brother had smiled his approbation on her first making her appearance in the drawing-room, punctual to the minute named for their departure.

"Well, that is over," exclaimed Adela. . . . "I can't tell you how glad I am" . . . throwing down her gloves and fan upon Mary's writing-table . . . "One is really so worried . . . so many strangers . . . such incessant dancing . . . and many of them so stupid—so old too . . . and yet what can one do? . . . I feel quite jaded, and"—approaching a mirror—"I am sure I look so—quite frightful. I can't tell how it is, Mary, that you never look jaded."

"And yet," said Mary, with a sweet, affectionate smile, "it is not so very difficult, dear Addy, to account for the difference, in this respect, between us. There is in me little to alter—I have little to lose. You must not envy me my unvarying mediocrity; and you must consent, dear, to pay the penalty of . . ." She paused for a moment, and then added . . . "What are those lines . . . Chords . . .

'Chords which vibrate sweetest measures,
Thrill the deepest notes of woe.' . . .

Not very happily applied, is it?—but you know what I mean."

Adela was not in the best of humours. "You need not laugh at me," she said. "Mediocrity, indeed!—you think so . . ." but she did not go on; she had turned round, and seen Mary's artless face beaming with tenderest sisterly affection. . . . It was impossible to

think that those sweet smiling lips could give utterance to a cutting sarcasm. She was silent—turned again towards the mirror—took from her head a wreath of flowers, threw it upon a couch, and then proceeded to unclasp her bracelets.

"Are you very tired?" asked Mary.

"Dreadfully—those three last quadrilles—and then to be obliged to waltz with that tall maypole of a man, Mr. Kingston, so wearisomely heavy . . . no lightness, no elasticity—and so many partners, all asking the same eternal question, 'How do I like India?' Oh! how tired I am of having to answer that question!"

"It is tiresome," said Mary; "but I suppose that it is a penalty paid by all during the first few weeks of their residence in India—and we must bear it with all philosophy . . . Besides, after all, it is a question, which sometimes opens the way to pleasant and profitable conversation."

"I'm sure I have never found it so," returned Adela. "All the pleasant and profitable conversation seems to be reserved for you. I think the men here are insufferably stupid . . . the greater number of them at least . . . and, if there are pleasant people, one cannot see more of them here than of the veriest drones of society . . . the one quadrille over, nothing more can be done. I am sure that I should have liked to have danced again with Captain Danvers, and to have sat out with him one quadrille. We are really obliged to be so particular in this place."

"It is always best," said Mary, "to err on the safe side."

"A very original and profound observation assuredly," returned Adela, "and practically you seem to think that the safe side lies with grey hairs, and wrinkled cheeks, and stooping shoulders. But I am not so sure of that. Old men in this country are always on the look out for young wives—perhaps, too," she added, with something of a sneer, "young girls are often on the look out for old husbands."

"Adela!"—

"That Dr. Winter... for my part I cannot see what there is to like in him—so very plain, and so very prosy. I cannot understand what you could find so 'pleasant and profitable' in his conversation, as to detain you for almost an hour... and that, too, when I know Mr. Lorimer wanted so much to dance with you."

"He is a very excellent man," said Mary; "our brother greatly esteems him. He has great ability—a fund of most interesting information... I like him very much."

"If," continued Adela, seating herself on a couch, with a weary sigh, "if it had been Mr. Grey... not that I like the man... but he is young, at all events, and good-looking. You see I am not prejudiced... I don't like Mr. Grey—he seems always to be sneering—so sarcastic when he talks to me..."

"So sarcastic!" exclaimed Mary, in tones of genuine surprise. "I thought him so unpresuming—so deferential—I am sure he is not sarcastic..."

"When you have seen as much of the world as I have..." pulling to pieces a faded bouquet... "but I

am sure I do not wish to destroy your good opinion of Mr. Grey... Indeed, I admire him myself very much—I think he is extremely good-looking ... except Captain Danvers, perhaps the most gentlemanly man I have met... And Dr. Winter, too, I have no doubt he is a very good old man—but I don't like old men—By the bye, Mary, who was that very white-haired old gentleman by whom I saw you sitting on a sofa?"

"That was Mr. Wilton."

"Wilton..." a slight blush was visible on her pretty face. "Is he..."

"Yes," said Mary, anticipating the question which her sister was about to put, "the father of Mr. Mark Wilton... of our old friend."

"Do not say ours," with much eagerness—"You know, I never liked him... and yet..." there was more of softness in her voice as she continued, "I ought not, I am sure, to think of him otherwise, than with kindness—he thought kindly—perhaps, too kindly of me. Perhaps, he still thinks kindly of me... I wonder where he is?"

"I was going to tell you... only waiting for a good opportunity to introduce the subject," said Mary, pleased to witness these latter evidences of better feeling in her sister—"I have been talking to Mr. Wilton about him. The poor old man introduced himself to me..."

"Why do you call him a poor old man?"

"He seems in such wretched spirits—in such wretched health. He told me that nothing but the urgent persuasions of Mrs. Harrington—our good

hostess—what a nice person she seems!—nothing but a strong desire to please her, could have induced him to be present at the party... But I was going to say that he introduced himself to me—speaking first of Edmund, whom he seems greatly to respect, and then referring to his son, of whom he spoke as a very old acquaintance of ours... one, too, who had never forgotten us."

"Forgotten us... no; he said he never should forget... poor Mark!—and where is he?"

"At Caubul."

"At Caubul?"—Adela dropped at her feet the last stem of the last flower of the bouquet.

"Yes," resumed Mary, "he is with his regiment at Caubul. Mr. Wilton heard from him a little time ago—as recently, he says, as he could have heard from him. He—I mean Mark, then spoke of our expected arrival—begged his father to speak kindly of him to us... to ask if we still remembered him—spoke of our long intimacy from the time when we were almost children—hoped that we would send him a message, to say that he had still a place in our kindly remembrances."

"Poor Mark!"... her eyes upon the ground, and one little white-slippered foot scattering the rose-leaves which lay upon the matted floor.... "Poor Mark!".... in tremulous accents.... "I am sure I think kindly of him—I hope you sent him a kind message."

"Yes—I sent him a kind message... said that we should always be glad to hear of his prosperity—always take an interest in his career." She did not tell her

sister what the old man had said in return, though the words had grievously troubled—were still troubling—her gentle heart. He had thanked her in a faltering voice, and added, "The message will never reach him."

"I did not much like Mark, you know," resumed Adela, the pretty satin slipper still wandering among the crushed rose-leaves, "I never could bring myself entirely to like him; I know he had what they call good qualities, but he was very plain . . . so short . . . such a want of elegance . . . so dark and heavy-looking—always ugly as a boy; and when he came home from India, though he had not been two years absent, I thought him still worse . . . sickness, the climate I suppose . . . he was so sallow . . . altogether, I thought frightful."

"And yet," said Mary, "there was often a kindly—quite a sweet expression on his face, which made one almost forget the plainness of his features; and when he was induced to talk—it was not often, I know, for he was so reserved—on other than common topics, his face lit up with intelligence . . . he was almost handsome."

"Like the poor beast in the fairy tale . . . well, I do not think that I could have taken compassion even on that beast. Compassion . . . why, yes, I might have pitied him, but not in that way—not practically. I think, Mary, that you, perhaps, might be capable of so heroic an act . . . you, so sage as you are . . . always talking about substance and shadow; but I—I never was above such weakness."

Mary sighed . . . "Jesting, or not jesting, Adela, you give me credit for more than I possess . . . I am

afraid that I could not love" . . . Then checking herself, she added, as though anxious to change the subject, " So it is determined, Edmund tells me, that we go to Titaghur on Saturday."

" Is it ?" said Adela, rising, " is it ? how *triste* we shall be" . . . then walking to the other end of the room, " How far—do you know, Mary ?—how far is Titaghur from Barrackpore ?"

" A very little distance, I believe," said Mary, " I think Dr. Winter told me that Barrackpore lies on one side of the governor-general's park, Titaghur on the other . . . I think that they must be very close."

" Yes, I think they must be. The park . . . I should like much to know what sort of place this park is ; the governor-general's country house is at Barrackpore ; Captain Danvers has been telling me all about it . . . and he says—you know he is one of the governor-general's *aides-de-camp*—that if we go to Titaghur, he shall be able to see us whenever Lord A—— goes down to the country-house . . . every week, if not oftener . . . and the park, he says, is such a very nice place for riding, and *Fairy* is to be quite at my disposal . . . perhaps, after all, Titaghur will not be so very *triste*."

" *Triste* . . . oh ! I am sure not" . . . with much earnestness . . . " we shall see so much more of the country—of the people . . . perhaps, be able to catch some glimpses of native manners . . . gain some idea of native institutions. Calcutta is so much like England—one might live here for many years, and know little or nothing of India at the end of them . . . so Dr. Winter says—so Mr. Grey says . . . and they have both of them travelled all over

the country . . . I have been so interested by much they have told me . . . such a curious people . . . with something to admire; much to grieve over . . . such a mass of grievous error, and yet not without goodness—goodness most ill-directed . . . the channel always filthy, the current of good intention sometimes pure. . . . "

" Oh! if this is what you are going to enlarge upon . . . the pleasant and profitable conversation, I suppose, all to be retained for my benefit, at three o'clock in the morning—(the clock was striking as she spoke)—I shall wish you a very good night—a good morning, I mean. As for the people, I see nothing interesting in the wretches, and as for the country, I cordially detest it. I wish, Mary, you would call the ayah!—oh! how jaded I shall look to-morrow morning; I hope nobody will call."

Mary summoned the ayah . . . then seated herself at the writing-table, and read as intently as though it had been mid-day, the wonted chapter of the Bible, whilst Adela was scolding the servant for falling asleep over her hair.

CHAPTER VII.

LOVE-DAWNINGS.

"'Tis very plain,
Some soft spots had their birth in me at first;
If not love—say, like love."

Robert Browning.

On the following Saturday morning the Balfours removed to Titaghur, a pleasant spot on the banks of the Hooghly river some fourteen miles above Calcutta. The house was a furnished one, roomy, and well-situated, with an extensive garden and a wooded lawn which might almost be called a park. Mrs. Balfour was in high spirits. . . . It would do Edmund so much good; it would do the children so much good. Their ponies had come down in the morning, and the dear things might take such nice long rides in Barrackpore Park. . . and so much amusement for them, too. The governor-general's menageries. . . . the birds, the monkeys, the gardens. . . . it would be quite a treat for them. And Edmund, too—she was quite sure that he would soon, begin to pick up wonderfully. Change of air, change of scene. . . . worth all the medicines in the world. . . . and then so much more exercise. Early hours, too—they had had too much racketting. She was quite sure it was very bad for her husband—very bad for every

one. Now they would be a nice, cheerful domestic party. . . . no dreariness, and yet no dissipation. It was just what they all wanted.

Mary was equally well pleased with the change. She had been sighing for a little repose. She wanted time to think; she wanted time to read. Her pencil had long lain idle, and India, she was quite sure, must be full of interesting subjects. Every thing so new, too. . . . the rich, warm tints, the strong masses, the sudden alternations of light and shade. In Calcutta she had done nothing. There had been so many distractions; she had lived in such a constant whirl—a state of excitement most unfavourable to every kind of mental cultivation. Now she would do so much. . . She been very busy during the day or two preceding their departure. Mrs. Balfour had given orders to her *durwan* to dismiss every visitor with the two forbidding words, *durwaseh bund;** and whilst she had been superintending the household arrangements, rendered necessary by this change of residence, Mary had been making herself extremely useful in many ways—in none more so than in the selection of books, and music, and bijouterie, and all those numberless little things, which, skilfully distributed, give even to a bare lodging a cheerful aspect of *home.* The fruits of these *petits soins* were now visible in every room. The tables were covered with books. There were vases and cornucopias filled with flowers. There was a writing-table soon fitted

* *Durwan*—the gate-keeper, or porter. *Durwaseh bund*—literally, the gate is closed—is the Indian "Not at home." It answers every social purpose and does not involve a lie.

up with every useful and many ornamental appendages. . . . The piano, which had been sent down from Calcutta, was well supplied with music. In short, the drawing-room had undergone a metamorphosis as rapid as it was complete. It was as though the wand of a fairy had been waved, and a dreary, deserted mansion been suddenly changed into a cheerful dwelling-house. Even Adela before tiffin-time acknowledged that the place was not so bad after all.

It was arranged that Balfour should drive down, after office hours, in the buggy. If he could get away early, so much the better. He was not without a hope that he might reach Titaghur between five and six in the evening, perhaps even before sunset. He would then be able, he said, to stroll about the garden for an hour before dinner. He would find them at home, he knew, as there could be no evening drive, the horses having done already a very fair share of work in bringing the two carriages down to Titaghur.

Nor did he disappoint his wife. The sun had scarcely set, when he drove into the compound. There was a gentleman with him. It was Mr. Grey.

Perhaps Mrs. Balfour would rather have seen her husband sitting alone in the buggy. This, at least, was her first thought, as she saw from the upper verandah the two gentlemen approaching the house. But, she presently said to herself, "He was complaining yesterday evening, and I thought he looked ill. . . . It is like Edmund, to be considerate for others . . . more considerate than for himself. . . . I am glad that he has brought Mr. Grey . . . he will remain with us till

Monday, and the change may do him good. My first feeling was a selfish one. I am glad he has come."

She went down stairs to welcome her husband and her husband's friend. She thought that both gentlemen looked fagged—worried—her husband much the worse of the two. Balfour asked after the children . . . they had gone out in the park. After his sisters —Adela was in her own room, Mary somewhere in the garden with her sketch-book.

"Send for your bonnet," he said . . . "these evenings are very cold . . . and we will stroll about the compound . . . see what Mary is doing."

An ayah was sent for, and the bonnet brought. They walked out together. The quick eye of Herbert Grey soon detected, through the trees, the figure of Mary Balfour. She was standing at a little distance from the margin of the river, with a book in her hand. She was sketching.

Edmund was glad to see what was his sister's employment. He hoped that she would soon fill her sketch-book. Herbert Grey congratulated her on the possession of so delightful a talent. . . . He was himself very fond of drawing. "He was but a bungler," he said, "he had more enthusiasm than skill. Perhaps he could appreciate excellence in others. . . ." Mrs. Balfour interrupted him,

"You are not to believe all he says, Mary; I will order him to bring his portfolio with him the next time he comes this way."

Still he protested that he was but a bungler . . . he drew a little for his own amusement. It was a

fancy of his to carry off a sketch—he called it a sketch by courtesy, but it served his purpose as a memento—of every remarkable place he visited. It was pleasant to refer to in after days. . . . Better on the whole than a written journal—it was his way of writing his travels.

"And a very excellent way too, my good fellow," said Balfour, "come, you have ridden that horse, *modesty*, long enough. . . . Have you a spare pencil—a spare scrap of card-board in your portfolio, Mary? If you have, give it to Grey, and whilst you are sketching down the river, he may be sketching *up* it. I want some views very much. I know nothing more useful on a drawing-room table than a full portfolio, just before dinner."

Mary had abundance of pencils . . . a good supply, too, of drawing-board. There was something so irresistible in her manner, as she offered them to Herbert Grey, that had he been much more disinclined than he really was, to become her fellow-labourer, he could not have refused to take them. Mary had commenced her sketch. Grey asked permission to see it—the permission was readily granted; and he was earnest in his congratulations. He saw at once that she had a right appreciation of what is necessary to make up a picture; that she had a quick artist's eye—a true perception of the beautiful in form, in colour—in the alternations of light and shadow. She had not advanced far; there was little to indicate her powers of execution; but he augured well from what he saw were her intentions, what he saw she had selected as

the components of her picture. He said this and much more. He seemed, too, far less inclined to proceed with his own sketch, than to watch the progress of Mary's. He was peculiarly interested in the construction of a *ghaut*, on the opposite side of the river, which came, with excellent effect, into her picture. His own erection of Government House came on very slowly.

Meanwhile Balfour and his wife strolled a little way apart from the sketchers . . . "I have something to tell you," he said.

"I am afraid that it is nothing very cheering," she replied. "You look harassed—something has happened."

"I think it best to tell you the worst always," he said. "It is best that you should know every thing; I must have your advice. The truth is, that there are very bad accounts from Affghanistan—very distressing accounts; and we must expect to hear still worse. All Caubul is in arms . . . The whole country seems to have arisen as one man . . . Every thing is somewhat vague at present, but there is no doubt that affairs are in a desperately bad state. I should not be surprised if there were to be a massacre."

"This is terrible, indeed—Have these accounts been received by government?

"No. As far as I can ascertain, government have no intelligence; the passes are still closed. There is not a line yet from Caubul."

"Then whence have you derived," asked Mrs. Balfour, "all this terrible intelligence? Are you quite sure that it is true?"

"I wish that I could question its truth," said Balfour. "I see no room for doubt. I was at * * * * (naming one of the principal newspaper offices) and there I learnt—Clay told me, indeed, that he had received several letters from the upper provinces—from Loodheanah, Kurnaul, Meerut—there they have all the same accounts . . . native accounts—but these native rumours always are the precursors of more certain news—and, at a time when our communications are interrupted, we can expect no other intelligence. These reports appear to be credited by the native bankers—and they are not bad judges of the authenticity of news. Besides, it is all so probable."

"Are there any detailed particulars" . . . trembling a little . . . "any names, Edmund?"

"The story is, that there has been a rising in the town—that the house of Sir Alexander Burnes has been attacked . . . that he has been murdered. Some accounts say that he has only been wounded—that he still lives in the Kuzzilbash quarters—The troops appear to be divided . . . some in cantonments, some in the Bala Hissar . . . but it would seem that no effectual efforts have been made to put down the insurgents."

"And Arthur Carrington . . . you think that he is at Caubul?"

"Yes—his regiment, you know, marched at the beginning of last month . . . It is with Sale—now at Jullalabad . . . but Carrington is not there. He appears to have been left behind with the sick men of the ——. It must have been gall and worm-wood to him, at such a time."

"And danger . . . Oh! if he had but left that dreadful place."

"He might not have been safer—who knows?—but we might, at least, have heard of him. From Caubul we can gain no positive tidings—all must be doubt—all uncertainty. It is well that we have come to this place. I have not ordered our papers to be sent here. I think, all things considered, it would be better not to disclose this unfortunate intelligence to my sister—I mean to poor Adela—at all events, whilst every thing is so uncertain . . . It would only distress her to no purpose . . . and here . . . if we had remained in Calcutta, it might have been necessary, for in the first place, the news would have reached her through some channel or other; and in the next, I could not have borne to see her, at such a time, betraying the levity, which I fear is inherent in her nature—plunging into thoughtless gaiety, as though there were nothing peculiar in her position.

"Oh! but if she knew," said Mrs. Balfour—"if she suspected there were any real danger, I am sure it would be different—I am sure that Adela would be more serious; but she does not suspect—she does not know—she is by nature so thoughtless, and yet not without good feeling—not without kindliness of heart."

"I think she has strong feeling," said Balfour, "and that it is sometimes good. . . . I cannot quite understand her; and I think that occasionally, perhaps, I am inclined to judge her a little harshly. She has laboured under great disadvantages . . . you would say, perhaps, 'so has Mary;' but how few in the world are like Mary. It is difficult to read her conduct aright—to measure cor-

rectly the extent of her affection for poor Carrington. I cannot doubt that she would be greatly shocked—greatly grieved if she were to think that there is any real danger; but she does not seem to possess any of that perfect love—that true womanly delicacy, which would lead her, danger or no danger, to subdue, at such a time as this, those impulses which may, in the presence of a censorious people, however harmless in themselves, lead to the impression that she has not that regard for her betrothed—that regard for herself—which the connexion between them ought to establish, and which ought to be apparent in her every action—almost in every word. Perhaps I speak too strongly—perhaps I do not make sufficient allowances for poor Adela. It is certain that these long engagements are desperately bad things. I have seen many instances in which they have been attended by a world of misery. If our daughters—but it is too early to trouble ourselves about them; and we often make sage resolutions, to which, when the time comes, we fail to adhere. The dear little things!—and as we talk of them, I see they come . . . just visible between the trees. Let us go across the compound . . . I dare say they have been looking at the *jaunwars*."*

In the meanwhile Mary had been progressing most successfully with her sketch; and Herbert Grey had been talking a good deal, but drawing little or nothing. He had been expatiating, with much enthusiasm, on the beauty of the scene before them—the clear, bright, cloudless sky, the blending of the many colours near the horizon, just after the sun had set . . . the blue, the purple, the rose-tints, the orange, the yellow . . . all

* Animals.

merging one into another . . . no sensible transition; then the deep purple shadows of the wooded banks, with their ghauts and temples here and there, standing out in bold relief against the sky; the tranquil river reflecting the brightness of the heavens, and the dark silhouettes of the many fantastical native boats, which, in picturesque variety, were dropping down the stream. "There are few scenes," he said, "more beautiful than this . . . it is but a brief glimpse of beauty; and we must make the most of it whilst it lasts. Just after the sun has set we are indulged with these gorgeous colours —these splendid masses of light and shade. And I know nothing more picturesque than the effect of the dark outlines of those native boats on the golden bosom of the illumined water. It is soon gone . . . brief time is allowed to the sketcher, Miss Balfour. Even now, I dare say, you find it is growing somewhat dark—too dark, perhaps, to fill in the details of your picture."

"And you?"

"Oh! . . . judging by the appearance of my drawing-board, I have long ago found it too dark for work. I told you that I was but a bungler. Another time, perhaps. Oh! Miss Balfour, I do so long to see that picture completed. It will be a gem, I'm sure . . . such capability . . . and with your taste! I am ashamed to confess that I was almost going to deliver myself of a very wicked wish—almost saying that I wish to-morrow were not Sunday, that I might see your sketch coloured . . . that I might take a lesson."

"A lesson . . . oh! Mr. Grey, I shall begin soon to think that you are laughing at me."

Grey was silent; he bit his under lip, and his eyelids drooped. He appeared to be hurt. Mary, who was adding just one more boat—one which struck her as being more than commonly picturesque—to the little fleet that was gliding down her river, before she closed her portfolio, did not observe his annoyance, and presently resumed: "I shall, indeed, begin to think that you are laughing at me—that you have been laughing at me all along . . . I to give you lessons!"

"You do not really think" .... his eyes still on the ground .... "you cannot think, Miss Balfour .... you cannot, I hope, have such a very bad opinion of me. To laugh at you .... to turn you into ridicule. Few people know themselves .... perhaps I do not .... perhaps, I am no exception, but I do not think that I am sarcastic—that I am wont to sneer at any one. But if I were malicious—if sarcasm were one of my many failings—I do not think that I should—indeed, I am sure that I should never—make you the object of my sarcasms. I could not be so very bad as to sneer at Miss Balfour."

Mary was just closing her portfolio. There was something in the tones of Grey's voice that could not be mistaken. It was obvious that he was annoyed—that she had said something to wound him. She turned round, and if there had been any doubt lingering in her mind, the expression of his face would have dispersed it. It was an expression of extreme distress; not of anger, but of sorrow. In tones of genuine consternation, of deep concern, she instantly exclaimed: "Oh! what have I done? what can I have said to hurt you?"

Grey lifted his eyes from the ground, and looked into

Mary's face. The concern which she had expressed was visible, sweetly, benignly visible there. The pulses of the young man's heart throbbed with a new-born pleasure. That kind face—those sweet eyes—(he thought that they were slightly suffused with tears)—that voice of unmistakeable distress; she was really sorry to have wounded by a careless word the feelings of one so sensitive, and what joy to him to feel assured, by all these natural manifestations, that she looked not on with cold indifference, whilst he was suffering by her side.

"I am sure," she added, "I did not mean.... I could not have meant to hurt you. You must have misunderstood me; what did I say?"

"Oh! nothing—nothing .... it was very foolish .... very culpable to express annoyance in such a manner as to annoy you. It was nothing—that is, if any one else had said it, it would have been nothing—but from *you* ... I could not bear you to think even for a minute that I was laughing at you—could not bear the thought of your having such a very mean opinion of me."

"Nay," said Mary, "I might have thought you were laughing at me, and not have had a bad opinion of you. It would not, in my estimation, have been such a culpable act."

"It would have been *so* culpable," said Grey, "I should never have forgiven myself. I should have hated myself had I thought it possible."

"I am sure," said Mary, "that if the offence be so grave an one in your estimation, I could never think you capable of committing it. I am very sorry to have pained you .... but you will forgive me, I know."

She held out her ungloved hand. Herbert Grey was not slow to accept this token of reconciliation. Perhaps the little hand was retained longer than strict courtesy demanded. And if it were, Mary Balfour was not angry at the excess.

The shades of evening were thickening around them. Where were Mr. and Mrs. Balfour? Herbert Grey and Mary Balfour asked each other; neither knew. They must be somewhere in the compound, and the sketchers would go in search of them. Unquestionably the best plan would have been to have gone towards the house. Somehow or other they went *from* it.

They went on arm-in-arm, and had soon ceased to look for Edmund and his wife. Perhaps they had almost forgotten the existence of such people. The cloud had passed away entirely from the brow of Herbert Grey; and he was happier—much happier than before it had gathered over him. Such clouds as these are often among the most fortunate circumstances of a man's life They do more for him than a month of sunshine.

He was very animated, and he talked well—talked like a man of sense, a man of education, a man of feeling; better than all, a man of principle—of sound, good, Christian principle.

He spoke of the landscape which they had been sketching—thence of the general characteristics of Indian scenery. He observed that young people very often came out to India with a certain preconceived notion, whence derived it was difficult to say, of the gorgeous magnificence of the East—of its beauty, of its splendour, of its luxuriance; that in consequence of

these impressions, of these exaggerated expectations, the first feeling on actual arrival in India, was generally one of disappointment—he was sorry to add, that in many cases, the re-action was a permanent one; that people most unfortunately—unfortunately for themselves—unfortunately for others—plunged into an opposite extreme. "They become lasting sceptics," he said, "of the beauty of India—they cannot believe that there is any thing interesting, any thing delightful in such a country as this. They close their eyes against the picturesque altogether, because it does not greet them, from the low, feverish jungles of Saugor island, or because the Black Town of Madras is not composed of such gorgeous palaces, as he has read of in the 'Arabian Nights.' That first cold shudder of disappointment—oh? what mischief it does! How many never recover from the shock. India may have been the land of their young dreams—the Canaan of all their intellectual wanderings—they may have looked, in imagination, forward to a life in the East, as a life of rapturous joy—of elevated excitement—and yet, after a week spent in India, because neither Writers' buildings nor Cadet-barracks are splendid palaces, commanding a view of sparkling rivers, and magnificent pine-groves, and wide plains studded with browsing camels and caparisoned elephants—because in coming up the river they have seen genuine mud-banks, where they looked for a coral strand, they become at once confirmed in the belief that India contains nothing beautiful—nothing grand—nothing, in short, of the

picturesque; and then, when the opportunity of seeing some of the finest sights in nature is presented to them, they will not take the trouble to avail themselves of it. They will not draw aside the doors of their palanquins—or throw open the venetian blinds of their *budgerows*. Whether they travel by land or travel by water, they are equally blind—equally indifferent—and then they go home and tell their friends that India contains nothing worth seeing."

"Oh! yes, Mr. Grey," said Mary Balfour, "I am afraid that this is too true; for often, already, have I been told that India contains 'nothing worth seeing.' If it were not for my brother, and Dr. Winter, and you, Mr. Grey—I should long ago have begun to mistrust my own judgment... to look upon myself as an idle dreamer—one continually under the thrall of a strong delusion. But thus supported, how can I doubt ... when of all whom I have met, they whose judgment I most respect, with whom I should be most glad to sympathise ... when I find that they are on my side, how can I mistrust the estimation I had formed. And it would have been so painful to have been undeceived."

"I am so glad to hear you say so," said Grey, in a low voice, unwilling to interrupt, at such a time, even for a moment, one who was speaking in a strain so very grateful to him.

And she continued—"Many have said to me, that this is a country in which we must be satisfied barely to exist; and I have been recommended—ay, and by

grey-haired men too, whose opinions might be supposed to carry some weight with them . . . I have been recommended to make myself always as comfortable as I can in-doors, and not to trouble myself about what is going on out of doors . . . one gentleman told me that the prettiest view to be seen in India, is a well-furnished drawing-room, and that the people are only remarkable—only interesting—inasmuch, as that they are good cooks. Is it really true, Mr. Grey—am I really to believe that the generality of gentlemen in India, take no more interest in the country—no more interest in the people, than such speeches as these would naturally lead me to suppose?"

"I hope not," said Herbert Grey. "Some men are so little true to themselves, as to boast of their indifference to all that is going on among the myriads of people by whom they are surrounded—who openly treat a 'black fellow' only as a beast, to be driven, or otherwise employed, as seems fit to the white man, his master. There is often a good deal of cant in this; silly people imagine it to be *fine*, and say, perhaps, more than they think. Still it must be admitted that there is a vast deal of indifference, a vast deal of ignorance, for the two are always associated. But the indifference is not universal—you must not think it universal, Miss Balfour. There are in our community many earnest, as there are many able men—in all parts of the country, I say, many earnest men, many really noble fellows, true philanthropists, who would do much, who would sacrifice much for the people. These cha-

racteristics are peculiar to no class—though, as you may readily believe, there are more such men among the missionaries, in proportion to their numbers, than among any other description of Anglo-Indians. The missionaries, we will admit, take the lead; but all classes have in their ranks some true philanthropists—the civil service, the military, the medical service, the commercial order, all have their representatives, and noble ones. As a missionary, a model for the devoted men who flock around the banner of the cross, there is Doctor Christian; in our own ranks—mine I mean, Miss Balfour, the civil service—I do not mean a family compliment, I am not unduly partial, I assure you—there is your brother—"

"He deserves all, I am sure that he deserves all that you can say of him," exclaimed Mary, whilst tears of grateful enthusiasm glistened in her gentle eyes.

"Yes, there is Balfour; I assure you, that I, as one of the order, am proud to see it so well represented. We could not look for a better representative; and then the military (to speak of men whom you have met, Miss Balfour), there is Captain Palus. I think that there is something really admirable in his impetuous enthusiasm; one can never doubt his sincerity for a moment—and it is something to see an honest man. He is overflowing with prejudices, to be sure; and he gives no quarter to our unfortunate service, when once he turns the edge of his indignant rhetoric against us. Very earnest men often are very prejudiced; and I can forgive his hatred of our order, because I really believe he loves humanity in the mass."

"I am not sure," said Mary, "that I should be inclined so readily to forgive him."

"You will stand up for our order, then!" exclaimed Herbert Grey—"that were an honour indeed."

"Have I not good reason—my brother—" she almost added, "and you—" Perhaps there was something in her face that said it as plainly as any words.

"You almost—nay, why almost?—belong to us," said Grey, his heart throbbing with delight as he spoke. "Will you consent, Miss Balfour, to be considered a portion of the 'job,'—the 'delusion,' which our good friend Palus declares our service to be? Remember, that 'wretched' and 'miserable,' are the epithets invariably joined to those complimentary nouns-substantive."

"And .ear," said Mary, "that sometimes the epithets are not altogether undeserved. I mean with regard to *our* sex. Perhaps, I am wrong. I hope I am. I shall gladly be undeceived. But is it not true, that in India we women too often forget our duties, too often content ourselves with doing no positive harm. I do not allude to domestic duties; as wives, as mothers, as daughters, I do not doubt that our countrywomen in India are as estimable as their sisters at home; but in the more extended fields of humanity—as women, Mr. Grey—I fear that they are sometimes deficient—wanting in charity, wanting in energy—doing nothing, sacrificing nothing, suffering their sympathies to wither up for lack of culture. I asked a lady, one evening in our own house, something about the success of missionary

efforts, the progress of evangelisation in the East—a very simple question, as I thought—and she said that all she knew about the matter was, that native Christians, as they were called, made very bad servants, and that she never admitted one into her establishment; and another lady, when I asked her opinion of a certain charity, in behalf of which I had lately read in one of the papers an animated appeal, said she believed it was one of the 'things' to which her husband subscribed in her name, but that there were so many of them, that she really could not pretend to know any thing of their individual merits. Am I to take these ladies as fair samples of the mass of our countrywomen in India? We griffins are too prone to jump from individual instances to general conclusions, if we have no experienced friends to direct our judgments."

"If I were to tell you, in reply to these questions," said Herbert Grey, "that this is the first time that they have ever been put to me, in such a strain of genuine, unaffected earnestness, they would, perhaps, be answered in the most effectual manner. I must admit the fact; but let our inferences, Miss Balfour, be drawn, as you I am sure are inclined to draw them, with all charity. It is true that the influence of Christian womanhood is not as extensively felt as we would wish it to be, throughout the country; still we must admit that there are among us some women, active in well-doing, who never sleep, are never weary, but so long as health and strength be permitted to them, continue to labour with pious zeal, and accomplish an in-

finity of good. I wish that I could say that there are *many* such—still it is a privilege to be able to say that there are some."

"But does not the very fact that there are some, Mr. Grey, go far to render more obvious, more palpable, the failures of all the rest? If there were none, it might be said that the climate acts as a preventive—that Englishwomen in India are physically incapacitated for all benevolent undertakings which require energy and activity—any amount of personal exertion. It might be said, too, that difference of language, religion, manners, raise up an impassable barrier between the English lady and the degraded inhabitants of the country—the pauper women, the pauper children, who swarm around her—in short, that there is no field for practical philanthropy. But what some can do, all can do, with necessarily a few peculiar exceptions, in this country, as in all others. I fear that there is an immense pile of neglected duties at the doors of our fellow-countrywomen."

"And yet we must not judge them too harshly," said Herbert Grey, "as we accord a higher measure of praise to the few, who do exert themselves as Christian women, we must in consideration of the impediments which actually do exist—the difficulties which are really to be surmounted—judge more leniently the fallers short."

"But I hope," said Mary, "you do not think these impediments so very great—beyond the power of ordinary zeal, ordinary perseverance to over-leap, for if you

do, I fear that. . . I mean, Mr. Grey, I had been thinking that I might be able to do some good. I hope you do not consider the thought a presumptuous one."

"Presumptuous! Oh! how could I". . . He was going on to protest against the construction which Mary was putting on his words, when the voice of Edmund Balfour was heard, calling them from the verandah. It had grown very dark; a few stars were visible, but the moon had not yet risen. They saw the lights burning in the drawing-room; they quickened their pace, and were soon beneath the portico; but not before Mary had said something about her desire to establish a school in the neighbourhood. . . not before . . . oh! not before poor Herbert Grey had lost his heart past hope of recovery.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BELEAGUERED.

"—— The camp is now
A post of danger.......
Wolf of the weald, and yellow-footed kite,
Enough is spread for you!"

Taylor.

On the 23rd of November, a few days before that mournful Saturday, which brought to the City of Palaces the first certain intelligence of the great insurrection in the city of the Shah, two young officers were sitting together in the cantonments of Caubul; sitting in one of the newly-finished rooms of the recently-erected barracks. They were sitting beside a table—a somewhat ricketty table, whose teak-wood slab showed on its unpolished surface many a dark liquor stain, many a ringed outline of the bottoms of tumblers and glasses, interspersed with not a few huge ink blotches; whilst here and there it was ornamented with curious devices, sketched with a sportive pen—profiles of general officers with gigantic epaulettes and monstrous noses, living groups of British grenadiers bayoneting fugitive Affghans, and other indications of a free hand, a lively imagination, and a disregard to the deterioration of property. On this table, which had seen a good deal more service than its present owner, might now be observed two black quart bottles, the same number of tum-

blers, and three wine glasses; the only other garniture of the board being two naked swords, a forage cap, and an oil-burning candle which made a sort of darkness visible in the room. Other pieces of furniture were there in the chamber; namely, three ancient chairs, two of them occupied by the gentlemen who were sitting at the table, and the third by a leather writing-case; a rude *charpoy*, or low native bed; two or three camel trunks, a pair of boot-trees, a saddle, and a pair of holsters. In one corner of the room stood a fowling-piece; in another there was a small phalanx of wine bottles. A few articles of military clothing were scattered about the room. Thrown hastily on the bed was a capacious blue uniform cloak, a part of which rested on the floor. Hanging from rude wooden pegs on the wall were a couple of bridles, and on the lid of one of the camel-trunks reposed a newspaper, an army list, and a few copies of old magazines. A dog lay sleeping beside the charpoy, making a comfortable bed of the folds of its master's cloak.

"I fear that it is all over now," said the elder of the two officers—a man some seven-and-twenty years of age, on whose face the ravages of sickness and sorrow were plainly visible. "We have lost to-day more than we shall ever recover. I am no croaker . . . and before others I would not even thus far express my misgivings . . . it is well to put a good face on the matter, certainly, before our men; to be cheerful—to be confident; but, my good fellow, it would be very idleness to attempt to delude you—to delude myself in your presence . . . the game is up . . . it was up at ten o'clock this morning."

"It is never up, my good fellow, Rivers," said the younger man, whose bright, cheerful face, ruddy with youth and abundant health, presented a strong contrast to the pale, care-worn countenance of his companion. "There is hope so long as we have a gun left us . . . so long as we can muster a single company . . . we have lost some of our bravest and best, it is true . . . it was bloody work this morning — but we have scores of gallant fellows yet among us . . . and the strength of a British force never did reside in its numbers. Help yourself, Rivers—the night is cold, and we must soon be abroad again."

"You are a strange fellow, Carrington," said Rivers, emptying his glass—"a month ago, and your face was clouded over . . . you were now desponding—now irritable . . . you thought, or said, that we were all on the high road to ruin, and seemed inclined to quarrel with every man who ventured to differ from you for a moment. You chafed like a young lion in the toils . . . you were the worst company in cantonments . . . and now, who more joyous . . . who more sanguine . . . who more full of energy than Arthur Carrington?"

"Nay, not joyous; any thing but joyous, Rivers . . . but when there is so much to be done, there is little time to think—little time to feel . . . at all events, to think about one's own misfortunes, to pity one's own sorrows."

"He who lacks time to mourn lacks time to mend.
Eternity mourns that; 'tis a bad cure
For life's worst ills, to have no time to feel them,"

returned Rivers, in a tone of voice which showed that he had derived no re-assurance from the sanguine tem-

perament of his friend. "There may be much to admire in your cheerfulness—your confidence, at such a time as this . . . but I am not sure that I wish to partake of your good spirits—I am not sure . . ."

"Come, come, my good fellow," said Carrington," . . . we want cheerful spirits at such a time as this . . . I will tolerate your wise saws . . . it would not be Ernest Rivers, if he had not a poetical sentiment ready at his command . . . and I don't dispute the soundness of your morality. I could put the truth in other words, quoting from a book of somewhat higher authority."

"You preach cheerfulness," returned Rivers . . . "you, who but a few weeks ago were the most mournful man in the country."

"A true bill," said Carrington, with something of a laugh. "I was the most mournful man. I had nothing to do but to mourn. I was mournful because I was inactive. You say I chafed like a young lion . . . so I did, and enough to make a man chafe too. We had not then an enemy at our gates. We did not sit with our drawn swords on the table . . . I was longing to turn my face towards the provinces — longing to escape from Affghanistan. My regiment was under orders to march. The relief long looked for had come at last . . . and then that cursed order . . . I, of all men, to be left behind—I to be left with the sick of the regiment—*Chafe!* Yes, I did chafe, to see the regiment march out of cantonments, and I to be left behind."

"I often marvelled, my good fellow," said Rivers, "that you did not get that order cancelled. I do not think you would have found it difficult. Regimental

orders are not like the orders of the Medes and Persians. If you had but represented the case . . . the peculiar hardship, which in your circumstances such an order involved, I am sure that it would have been cancelled."

"I might have done so—I am sure that I might have done so," returned Arthur Carrington. "I know more than one man, who would have taken the duty; but no one could have taken it without a sacrifice—a sacrifice greater than I could have wished any friend to make upon my account. I do not boast of being less selfish than other men; but this would have been so very selfish. Besides, at such seasons as this, every soldier should cheerfully take upon himself the duty which in regular course falls to his share—keeping close to the *roster*, without that chopping and changing, which is well enough in garrison or cantonment, in the heart of India, during seasons of profoundest peace. A man may have reason to repent of one such change to the end of his life. We do not know what is the actual condition at this moment of the fine fellows of the ——th. God grant that it is better than our own . . . I hope it is . . . I believe it is . . . and think, Rivers—think, if I had made an exchange, if I had gone with my regiment, leaving another to fill my place here—think how it would have been, if he had fallen and I had escaped. Better a thousand deaths . . . the agony, the infamy . . . what a life of wretchedness and shame would be endured by the man who should thus have chanced to sacrifice his friend."

"Misery, Carrington, perhaps . . . but not shame."

"I should think it shameful . . . you would think it

shameful...it might not really be disgraceful, but we should feel the disgrace.... But why should we talk of this, my good fellow? the regiment has marched, and here am I... I have left no one to die for me. Why, this it is that goes some way to make me what I am, Rivers . . . I cannot to be too thankful for the escape. ... Besides, when the regiment marched . . . marched and met the enemy... gained new laurels, and marched on with its face still towards the provinces... and I was left behind inactive—nothing to do but to fume, and fret, and study hospital returns—what wonder that my spirits sunk? But now... there is nothing in the world which can keep up a man's spirits half so well as the sense of having a duty to perform. You may call me unfeeling... heartless... think I am as cold as a stone . . . but I must say, Rivers, that since affairs have really become critical.. since important duties have devolved on every man in camp... since every British soldier, however humble, has been called upon, in behalf of his country, to muster all his courage, all his resolution, all his energy, all his activity... since, in short, I have been called upon to act, my good fellow, I have been quite a different man altogether.. As long as there is something to be done, I can bear up against private sorrows."

"Something to be done!" repeated Rivers, "something to be done!—what is there to be done? The time for doing, I fear, is past. Do not talk about doing; nothing can be done... we must prepare ourselves to suffer."

"Suffer!—yes; prepare ourselves to suffer—who is

not prepared?" asked Arthur Carrington; "but an English soldier takes care to do as well as to suffer. Do you think that those fine fellows, who were mown down this morning at our feet, *did* nothing before they suffered ... and shall we *do* nothing to avenge ourselves upon their murderers—nothing to teach these barbarians the true mettle of British valour?"

"British valour!" said Rivers, in tones of deep despondency, "where was our boasted British valour this morning?"

"Where was it?" returned Carrington, "where but upon the heights of Behmeru? . . . where but upon the bloody ground, where Laing and Mackintosh fell so nobly? . . . where but" . . .

"True . . . but are these sufficient to redeem the character of a whole army? . . . I am no croaker; but I tell you, Carrington, that we have lost more to-day than we can ever recover. We have tried our strength fairly against the enemy, and the result has been most disastrous. Better for us if ten times the number of men had fallen with their faces towards the enemy, than that the enemy, as they did to-day, should have taken compassion on our weakness, and the chiefs issued orders to their men not to harm the runaways."

"Did they?" . . . rising suddenly from his seat, and seizing one of the swords which lay upon the table . . . did they? Our time will come!—the insolent scoundrels! to take compassion upon our weakness!" . . . He strode up and down the room, grasping his sword, whilst his face worked spasmodically, and his voice was almost choaked with emotion. . . . "Better any thing than this contempt . . . better any thing than that they

should take pity upon us. . . . But our time will come, Rivers—be sure our time will come; to-morrow . . . we shall gather strength from defeat—avoid the fatal errors into which we fell to-day . . . all will soon be well . . . the cloud will soon pass away. We shall crush the hydra, be sure we shall . . . the dogs! they are firing still . . . again—and . . . again. . . . Let us go out, Rivers" . . . taking his foraging-cap from a peg, placing it on his head, and drawing it down over his brows . . . "do not let us wait till we are summoned . . . ah!—who comes here?"

The door was opened by an officer older by some years than the two already in the room . . . . A cloak was over his shoulders, his cap was on his head, his chin-strap drawn tightly down . . . . "Carrington," he said, in a low and rather solemn voice, "I thought I might find you here, and if here, not alone, for you have been out well nigh all day . . . . I have a small favour to ask of you, and of you, Mr. Rivers . . . . I have no doubt that you will oblige me." . . . .

"By all means," said Carrington" . . . . but sit down . . . . a glass of wine at such a time as this can do no man any harm . . . . help yourself. The dogs are firing again."

"Yes—they are growing more insolent every hour," said the new comer, who was a captain in the native cavalry. "Heaven knows to what passes they may come ere we are many hours older. We must hope for the best, but it is as well to be prepared for the worst . . . . our duty to be prepared in every way. I have lost some of my oldest and best friends, and when my own turn may

come, Omniscience only knows. I hope I shall be ready whenever the time comes.... but what I have to say now relates to worldly affairs. I have a wife, you know" .... his voice faltered .... " I have been married, you know, scarcely a year.... a young wife" .... he passed his gloved hand rapidly across his eyes, and resumed in a firmer voice .... " perhaps, too, a young infant.... if God is merciful and spare them both. But this is uncertain ; Heaven knows what may be in store .... whether the widow will clasp the orphaned babe .... whether both or neither may survive .... but I have been thinking, during the last few days, that it would be culpable in me at such a time as this, not to execute a will. I have a little property—not much ... but sufficient when added to the widow's pension to secure her every comfort.... to maintain her in respectability .... and I would not leave this little property, in the event of my dying without issue, to be seized—the legal portion of it, I mean—by my next of kin. I am no lawyer—I know little about these things.... but I have heard even of the clearly-expressed will of testators having been set aside, in consequence of slight informalities, and unfortunate widows being defrauded by next of kin, who have never, during the lives of the deceased, given them a single thought—moved hand or foot in their behalf... I must place my poor little wife beyond all such contingencies as this. I care nothing for my next of kin—they care nothing for me. I have drawn up a will," continued Captain Witherington, producing at the same time from beneath his cloak a roll of paper—" it is very simply.... I believe very perspicuously worded

....formal enough, I believe, for a soldier's will; and if it be properly witnessed, I believe it will answer all purposes....now I want you, Carrington, and you, Mr. Rivers, to put your names to the document, as witnessing and signing it in the presence of each other." He spread the paper out on the table, and placed his finger on the spot where he desired the names to be placed—"Have you any objection to sign it?"

"None whatever," replied Carrington.... "I imagine".... rising from his seat, and moving toward a chair, on which was a writing-case, in a distant corner of the room—"I believe that I have some ink, and at least one pen.... but I think, my good fellow, that your life is worth at least as much as either of ours.... and if those rogues of Affghans were to expend your witnesses, I am afraid that we should not be of much use in proving the will." He spoke cheerfully... almost mirthfully, endeavouring to animate his drooping companions.

"If the will be saved," said Witherington, "it will bear your names...and there are those, I presume, who can prove the handwriting...I have thought of this...It would be as well, perhaps, to append a memorandum, naming some party, who, in case of accidents, can afford the necessary proof...whose name shall I write, Carrington?"

"Oh!—say *Edmund Balfour, Esq., Civil Service, Chowringhee*...he will do the needful, I have no doubt."

"And you—?" Rivers named a house of agency in Calcutta..."now sign...there...no, wait a minute ...I will sign it first in your presence...there...you

see that this is my handwriting—that I signed it in your presence ... now sign in the presence of each other ... I think we shall do the lawyers now," he added, more cheerfully, as he folded up the document, and thrust it into the breast of his frock-coat. "This is a weight, indeed, off my mind."

"But how," asked Rivers ... "how are you to secure this frail piece of paper ... how do you think it is to escape the universal wreck?"

"Ah! I have not lost sight of this; trust me," said Witherington, with something of a smile. "I have thought of nothing else all day ... I mean since we returned to cantonments after our hot morning's work ... I never thought we were really in a perilous position until the exhibition of this morning ... now, however, we have learnt a secret or two ... we know just what we can do ... or rather what our leaders can do with us ... I am no croaker ... but really, after the business of this morning, I do think with you, Mr. Rivers, that there is every prospect of an 'universal wreck.' ... I thought, at one time, of getting my will secured among our regimental records ... or perhaps of getting it among the papers of the Brigade Office ... but I doubt now whether this would prove any security at all ... I have thought of a better plan ... I have an Affghan servant, who is under considerable obligations to me ..."

Carrington interrupted the speaker with a laugh. ... "My good fellow," he said, "if you are going to trust, in such a matter as this, to the gratitude of an Affghan ... as well commit the document to the

winds... or give it to me to light my cheroot with ... I want a scrap of paper"... producing his cheroot-box as he spoke; "this is indeed an ingenious contrivance for escaping the 'universal wreck.'"

"I think differently," said Captain Witherington, apparently a little annoyed..."I would rely on Affghan gratitude almost as readily as on Affghan revenge. They never forgive an injury—and they seldom forget a kindness... I will trust the man... I believe him to be true... he would cut your throat, Carrington, I have no doubt, with the utmost pleasure..."

"I am much obliged, I am sure."

"I say," continued Witherington, "if he had the opportunity, he would cut your throat, because you are a *Kaffir*—one of the hated tribe of invaders ... an enemy to the independence of his country ... but he would not harm a hair of my head... nay, he would strike down the arm raised to kill me, even though it were his brother's ... because he thinks I am his friend—because he knows that I have rendered him a service. It was a service, such as an Affghan knows how to appreciate... though, perhaps, Carrington, *you* do not. He had been for some time betrothed."

"Betrothed!" exclaimed Carrington . . . "come, my good fellow . . . you spoke rather bitterly just now, but I am not going to quarrel with you. Go on . . . I am interested in your story."

"You are; then perhaps I have wronged you. . . . I thought that I should fail to interest you. I was going to say that this young Affghan, Afzul Khan, had been for some time betrothed. . . . You laugh at me

because I do not think the Affghans quite so black as it is now the fashion to paint them. They are the only people in the East who know what *love* is. I have always thought well of them since I became convinced of this fact. . . . There must be some good in them. . . . Well, I was going to tell you that the youngster was in great distress, because, having unfortunately a little time before been robbed of almost every thing he possessed, he was unable to come down with the necessary settlement, or rather the purchase-money; for the Affghans, though they do know what love is, make, after a fashion of their own, a bride an article of merchandise. The young people were betrothed; but he, in his destitute condition, was unable to bring matters to an issue, and in this conjuncture I took compassion on him, and by a small advance of money made him a happy and a grateful man. I believe that he will do any thing for me."

"I have no doubt . . . cut your throat while you are asleep in your bed, or render you any other small service of the same kind," said Carrington.

"Stuff! what idle prejudice is this!" exclaimed Captain Witherington. "If he had been inclined to cut my throat, I should not be now talking to you . . . he has had abundant opportunities. . . . The truth is, that it is too much our way to kick a man, and then to complain that he is not grateful. This is the way we treat the Hindoos . . . this is the way we treat the Affghans. . . . Trust me, Carrington, for knowing my man much better than you know him."

"I don't pretend to know him at all," returned Carrington; then, in an altered voice, "Well, I do acknowledge that he has great reason to be grateful . . . that if there be such a plant as gratitude in the country, you have done all that can be done to cultivate it . . . you have planted and watered . . . may God give the increase!"

"He will give it . . . you may be sure He will. . . . This night I purpose to place the document you have signed, in his safe keeping. . . . I suppose it is useless to ask whether I shall enclose any thing for you . . . whether there is any thing which you would wish to send to the provinces through the same channel."

Carrington did not immediately answer, and Captain Witherington continued:

"It is only in the event of my falling, only in the event of the destruction of the force, that he will be called upon to prove the sincerity of his protestations. If that event befall, what other hope is there for us? I can, at all events, lose nothing."

"True," said Carrington, speaking more slowly . . . "true . . . perhaps you are right. . . I think it would be worth trying. . . If you would have no objection, Mr. Witherington, I think perhaps I should like to enclose a letter in your despatch—when do you intend to close it?"

"To-night. . . Heaven only knows what the morrow may produce. The unhappy business of to-day can but have increased their presumption. There are no orders out yet for any operations to-morrow. . .

I suppose that henceforth we are to stand on the defensive. . . I hope wherever we meet the enemy again, it will not be at Behmeru."

"And why? . . . it would be a good thing to thrash the dogs on that very spot."

"So it would . . . but there is little hope of that. It is a foolish fancy . . . but I do not like the name . . . *Beh-meru!*—the 'husbandless.' Many the husbandless wife, I fear—many the widow, who will weep out her Christmas this year." Then walking up and down the room, and talking more to himself than to Carrington . . . "My poor little wife . . . Beh-meru, the husbandless. It is a strange legend . . . she died believing he was dead. It is better . . . better as it is. Heaven knows; but she did so wish to come with me" . . . then halting, and addressing himself to Carrington, his voice still husky with emotion, he said . . . "It is perhaps better, on the whole, for those whose wives and families are safe in the provinces. . . . I know not what will become of the women and children here . . . and yet I doubt not that there is not a wife in India who would not rather, in the devotedness of her heart, share all this peril with her husband . . . Well, will you send a letter?"

"Yes," said Carrington—"I will bring it to you efore midnight. Stay . . . one more glass of wine before you go, Witherington . . . To the gentle hearts that beat for us!—There, a bumper this time . . . the gentle hearts that beat for us!"—drinking off a bumper. "No despondency, my good fellow. . . . Strange, is it not?—I feel in better spirits—have fewer misgivings

altogether than when I left Calcutta in the spring. I remember then croaking grievously, full of the idea of leaving my bones in Affghanistan. . . . Halloa!—Rivers . . . you did not drink that toast . . . the gentle hearts that beat for us!"

Rivers had been sitting at the table, his head resting between his clenched hands. The only answer which he now gave forth was a deep groan—so loud that it made Witherington look round, before he closed the door behind him. Nothing could have been more hopelessly miserable than the expression of the poor fellow's pale face, which caught the captain's eye as he quitted the apartment.

CHAPTER IX.

THE STRICKEN.

"My heart is wasted with my woe, Oreana...
Alone I wander to and fro, Oreana."

Tennyson.

"——— He lack'd
Nothing in soldiership except good fortune."

Taylor.

A GROAN—it seemed to issue from the very depths of the poor man's heart. Arthur Carrington was in the act of lighting a cheroot when the distressing sound smote upon his ears; and there sat Rivers, his elbows on the table, his face buried between his hands, the very picture of hopeless sorrow. Carrington dropped the cheroot, and laying his hand gently on the shoulder of his friend, said, in accents of genuine kindliness, "What is the matter, my good fellow?"

"The matter? nothing"—raising his head from his hands, and looking with wan eyes into Carrington's face—"nothing. . . I am quite well—only that toast . . . do not drink it again. . . It pained me."

"I was not aware". . . began Arthur Carrington.

"I know you were not," said Rivers, hastily interrupting his friend. "How should you be. . . it was my fault. . . I have always been a very shy, reserved, morose sort of fellow. I have shrunk from confidences, even when others have been more open, more communica-

tive, more friendly. I have admired their candour; loved them for the confidence they have reposed in me—you especially, my old friend Arthur; but I have not been able to imitate it. . . I have often been on the point of opening my heart, but something, I know not what, some undefinable feeling of dread, has closed up the portals again. . . It is over now. . . we stand on the bridge, this wintry night, looking down into the cold, dark waters of annihilation which flow beneath us. I am very foolish—God grant that I be not impious. Will you hear what I have to say?"

"Speak out; it will do you good. Be assured that I shall sympathise with you. You may not think it, but I have suffered deeply myself."

"And I—none know how much," returned Rivers. "I will tell you". . .

"Before you begin, drink this," said Arthur Carrington, filling a tumbler nearly full of sherry.

"No, no; not that," said Rivers pushing the glass away, "I never do. . . I never, at such times, in my worst fits of depression, betake myself to these stimulants. I have been sorely tempted—almost upon the brink—more than once have I nearly given way; but the tempter has been beaten. . . I have not sought consolation in the bottle."

"Right, very right," said Carrington. "It were a sorry source of consolation. . . and to-night, we had better not. I have the utmost contempt for the pot-valiant."

"And I. . . when the hour comes, I hope it will find me in the possession of all my clearest faculties. Arthur," sliding his hand into that of his friend, "I feel for you;

I do, indeed. I don't know why I should be wretched. As I have nothing to hope, I have nothing to fear. . . nothing earthly, I mean. . . Now you—no words can tell how I feel for you, Arthur. . . to be here, girt around with peril. . . and she. . ."

"Don't unman me, Rivers, it will all end very well—I doubt not, very well," repeated Arthur Carrington. "Do not fear. . . Are *you* in my position?"

"In your position!" then after a pause, "yes. . . I am in your position. . . that is I am here and my betrothed far off. . . very far off—*in Heaven*."

"In Heaven!"

"Yes. . . dead—dead, and therefore in Heaven. Can I doubt it? One so young, so pure, so innocent. She died. . . a victim, Carrington, sacrificed to a long engagement. I did not see her, of course. . . I only heard of it—only a letter; and then. . . you see what I am. . . you cannot wonder that the world has become utterly dark."

"Not utterly, my good fellow," said Carrington, making an attempt at cheerfulness, "if there is nothing else, there is your profession—at your age—with your prospects". . .

"Prospects!" It would be difficult to conceive the world of anguish and desolation crowded into his utterance of that single word.

"And why not?"

"What prospects? Time was, Arthur—time was . . . but *now!* Prospects—what are a man's prospects when success has become more painful than failure . . . honour almost as intolerable as disgrace . . . 'Duty survives'

. . . I know it. If I did not, how were it possible to live? But what are my prospects, when success is rendered grievous to me by the thought that they who would have gloried in it—that they for whose sakes I would have dared any thing—whose smiles made up the real blessings of success . . . that they are not here to smile approbation . . . are not here to share my renown. Do not talk about prospects, Arthur—I have none. It is all over . . . I do not wish—believe me, I do not wish, to communicate my sadness to your heart. Indeed, I am to the full as happy now, as I have been since . . . that letter. I did not like to touch upon the subject before—these long engagements—knowing that you had one."

"Yes—yes—they wear the heart out. They are very, very bad . . . nothing worse," said Carrington, "I admit . . . Were I a parent, nothing would ever induce me to suffer these contracts, for Heaven only knows the amount of misery which they involve. Well—well . . . we talk sagely now; young people often do" . . . he continued more cheerfully . . . "perhaps when we grow old, we, too, shall talk wisely about 'prudential considerations.' It is a remarkable thing, Rivers, that these prudential people should constantly be doing such very imprudent things. I know nothing more imprudent than to permit an engagement between two young people at opposite ends of the world."

"Prudence, like ambition, often 'overleaps itself, and falls on the other side,'" said Rivers. "How badly do old people calculate . . . they are the worst reckoners in the world . . . they shake their heads, and talk very

solemnly about the 'ultimate happiness' of the young. The 'ultimate happiness,' those were the words which were so often in the mouth of *her* father. It was very painful, he knew—separation always is painful—but to secure our eventual—our ultimate happiness—and God knows he was right, too, but not in the sense in which he desired his words to be understood. He *was* right —the very prudential old man! he was right . . . for he did secure the ultimate happiness of his daughter . . . He made her happy before her time . . . perfect happiness—perfect peace . . . among the angels in heaven."

Carrington felt that it would be idle to attempt to calm the deep passion of his friend with any common offerings of consolation. What could he say? Better he thought to give free vent to the tide of emotion . . . to suffer its force to expend itself. So he sat silent in his sympathy, and Rivers continued:

"Old people, I say, are very prone to make dire mistakes. They know not — they have forgotten what youth is . . . and when they handle young hearts, they are utterly unconscious of the delicacy of the materials composing them. At three-score we are apt to forget that the coldness of old age has grown *upon* us, not grown *with* us; and when we make laws for the young, we are oblivious of the kind of people we are legislating for. It wont do, Carrington—it wont do. You may sever loving hearts, and tell them to be happy—talk of prudential considerations and eventual happiness . . . but whilst the young hearts are learning these bitter lessons, their education is cut short by death . . . perhaps we might discipline our hearts in

time, but they break beneath such hard schooling . . . So it was—so it was with her . . . she died . . . she was not strong enough . . . she was always very delicate—very sensitive . . . almost morbidly sensitive—ever apprehensive of evil . . . of a most excitable temperament. You could not have conceived a person less able to bear up against such trials. She said she could not bear up against them . . . but prudential considerations—eventual happiness . . . the solemn barbarity of three-score. It was as certain, though less merciful an immolation, than if the old man had sacrificed his daughter with a sharp knife. It was agreed at last that I should return to India . . . that something should be done to increase the scanty store of my poor subaltern's pay . . . a staff appointment . . . or, failing in that, promotion must come sooner or later . . . could not be so very far off. They say that she never smiled . . . that the little, it was but very slight, bloom upon her cheek forsook it then . . . and there was not even a tinge . . . all so white . . . until there came a little round spot . . . And time passed. She wrote very long letters—was always writing letters—it was her only work . . . her only consolation . . . and upon this she might have lived for some time—might have been still living . . . but for this accursed war. When she knew I was in Affghanistan, she ceased to hope. They did not tell me how much worse she was . . . nor did she ever complain . . . but still her letters revealed the truth. I could see, every month, that the handwriting was more feeble . . . more tremulous . . . and they were shorter, too . . . those dear letters . . . written

with painful effort . . . and in such a strain . . . the letters, Arthur, of a departing saint . . . And then one month, I was almost prepared for it, the letter was written by her mother . . . and I knew that she had gone to Heaven . . . I knew that her 'eventual happiness' had been secured—*and mine.*"

"Yours!"——

"Yes . . . I hope I am not presumptuous," returned Rivers, in a more tranquil tone . . . "but these things do not happen to us very often in vain. The heart of stone becomes a heart of flesh under such discipline as this . . . I am very different . . . I hope the change is all in my favour. Whilst every body is exclaiming, 'How you are altered?' looking only at my wasted limbs, my haggard face. I hope another change is visible to eyes which can penetrate the veil of gross flesh which hems in the heart. Even in a worldly view, Arthur, these things are not without their advantages. I doubt whether there is a man in camp, who, on his own account, is less careless of the issue of the present conflict than I am. There may be braver hearts among us; but I question whether there is one more thoroughly reckless . . . more regardless of life than I am."

"Not a more gallant fellow in camp—as I was about to say before," said Arthur Carrington, glad, indeed, that such a turn had been given to this most painful conversation. "I never saw a fellow in my life so cool in the midst of danger, as you were this morning—I never saw a fellow deal about him right and left so manfully, and with such extraordinary success. Why, man, you seemed to have the strength of a giant in what you call your wasted limbs. Your wonderful

pluck, Harry, seemed even to stir the hearts of the sepoys behind you; for certainly there was not a company out this morning which fought better than yours. You always were a most determined fellow . . . and now you seem to think no more of these Affghan gentlemen than of the mob-ocracy, who, in old times, were condemned in our school rows to feel the weight of your stripling arm. If ever a fellow deserved to be a C. B., you do . . . that's very certain . . . for your services this morning."

"There are many men of my standing, who deserve it," said Rivers, "but we subalterns must be contented to see our seniors carry off these honours . . . To me it matters not, as I have told you, in all sincerity; if promotion were to come—and come it will even more rapidly than I desire . . . if the performance of my duty (I have nothing more to boast of) were to be thus recognised by my sovereign . . . perhaps I should only be, if possible, a sadder man. But I could rejoice in the success of others . . . I hope I am one of those who can

'——— a glorious consolation find
In others' joys, when all their own are dead.'

If I could see you happy . . . if I could see some of the gallant fellows about me rewarded as they ought to be. If . . . there is poor Walsingham lying, I fear, on the bed of death . . . if I could see hope for him . . . and he so ambitious . . . so eager of distinction . . . to be cut short thus early in his career! If it had pleased God—if his fate had been reserved for me . . . for me, who have nothing to lose . . . whom no one will regret. Yet, whilst others were falling, I seemed to bear a charmed life. It is enough for me to do my duty . . .

I have nothing else to live for . . . but others can do as well—can do better. I could have been better spared than many who have fallen."

"Not you, my good fellow," exclaimed Carrington, with all that hearty sincerity of manner, which rendered him so popular. "You are just the very sort of man that we most want at the present time—one with no selfishness, no jealousy . . . determined only to do your duty at any cost, and with a power equal to the inclination. No, no:—if we had a score of such in the upper ranks, the Affghan pride would be humbled to the dust. The dogs!—Ah ! old Blucher, what are you growling for? I did not mean you—you are a nobler sort of animal . . . why, what's the matter?—not used yet to this sniping work, that a few shots should disturb your slumbers?"

"He is reminding us, the fine old fellow," said Rivers, taking up his sword, a heavy-bladed, sharp-edged weapon, not an useless regulation spindle—"reminding us that we have been here quite long enough, talking about ourselves and our sorrows. It is time to be abroad again; we may do some good. I do not think that these Affghans are much inclined to be over active at night; but we must keep a sharp look out. Come along . . . the night, I doubt not, is cold . . . you had better bring your cloak with you."

"No, it only encumbers me. I will not disturb Blucher; poor fellow! he seems to be in the full enjoyment of it. There now," placing his forage cap again on his head, and pulling it down over his eyes—"there, I am ready now. If there be no particular duty to perform,

if there is nothing to be done, it is something, at all events, to be abroad; it animates the men under arms ... on such occasions as these, the men cannot see too much of their officers."

"Very true."...They went out together; but had not proceeded many steps from Carrington's quarters, when Rivers asked if the door which they were passing was not Walsingham's. The answer was in the affirmative.

"Shall we step in and see him?"

"By all means," said Carrington; "poor fellow! It does a sick man good to know that his sufferings are not uncared for by his comrades."...They gently opened the door, and treading lightly, entered the apartment.

It was a room closely resembling that which they had just quitted; and the articles strewn about it were somewhat of the same description. On the table there were several bottles; but very different in their contents from what had graced Carrington's board; they were medicine and lotion bottles, and beside them was a brass basin, a roll of linen rag, and a large sponge.

A native servant—a Hindoo—was sitting in one corner of the room, engaged in picking off the felt from an old beaver hat. Beside the bed sat a medical officer, an assistant surgeon, who was watching his patient with the most brotherly care—an expression of genuine anxiety pervading his handsome face—and who quietly rose up when he heard the noise at the door, and walked on tip-toe towards it. When he saw who were the intruders, he seemed to forego his determination not to suffer them to enter. "Oh! it is you," he said in a

whisper. "Carrington, and you, Rivers; he has been asking after you both. Do not stay long; he must not be excited; but, perhaps, it will not hurt him to see you."

"And how is he?" whispered Carrington.

A very slight shake of the head, and a look of deep concern, told but too plainly that the case was a very bad one.

The young officers followed the doctor to the bed-side of their wounded friend. There he lay, or rather sat, propped up with pillows, a ghastly object to behold. He had been hewn down by an Affghan trooper, whose sabre had told with terrible effect upon Walsingham's right shoulder, cutting through flesh and muscle to the bone; whilst another blow had laid open, in a fearful manner, the poor fellow's right temple, the wound slanting down across the cheek-bone and narrowly avoiding the corner of the eye. All that human skill could do, had been done to diminish the extent of the injury. The wounds had been cleansed and bandaged with the utmost care, but the effusion of blood was still considerable, in spite of the styptics which had been applied, and the ligatures around his head and arm, as well as the coverings of the bed, were stained with the crimson fluid. Such part of the poor fellow's face as was visible was deadly pale; and there was a compressed look about his mouth, which told how greatly he suffered—how he struggled to suppress all indications of the pain he was enduring—pain occasioned much less by the flooding wounds, which rendered his case a dangerous one, than by the severe contusions he

had suffered; for before he could be extricated from the *mêlée*, he had been trampled down by the unsparing troops of the heavy chargers of the Affghan horsemen. He was altogether in a pitiable condition—mangled and mutilated from head to foot—weak, exhausted, and, it was feared, dying. But still he was the same bold, vigorous, eager, ambitious man, who had buckled on his sword that morning, an hour after midnight, determined to earn for himself a name in the Gazette. And he had earned it—wounded "dangerously"—but that was not the season of Gazettes. He seemed pleased to see his two friends advancing towards him; his dim eyes brightened up a little; he languidly extended his left arm, and in a low weak voice, he said: "How are you, my dear fellows?"

Carrington knelt down beside the bed, and pressed the feeble hand between his own. Rivers stood a little way apart, conversing with the good doctor. He thought it better that they should not all crowd about the sick bed together.

"My poor fellow," said Carrington, not venturing to look up, for his eyes were swimming with tears. . . "This is but a sorry finale to all your gallant exploits. To see you thus, my poor Walsingham . . . oh! the accursed dogs!"

"I shall do very well—have no uneasiness on my account," returned Walsingham, very feebly . . . "thanks to that good fellow, Rowland, there, who has nursed me as though I had been his brother. . . I shall do very well . . . I shall soon be abroad again."

"I hope you will—I hope you will," said Carrington . . . "and then our turn will come. The scoundrels!"

"Nay, my good Carrington . . ." a spasm of pain checked his utterance for a few seconds . . . "they fought well . . . they fought like men . . . their horsemen came stoutly to the charge . . . grievously heavy hoofs have those chargers . . . how they did crush down upon me!"

"Our turn will come," repeated Carrington.

"I hope it will . . . are there any orders out . . . any operations to-morrow?"

"None—none," replied Arthur Carrington, "I hear that there have been more councils; a great deal of talk, I have no doubt . . . but not a symptom of any thing to be done. It seems that we are to remain inactive behind our walls."

"I shall be up again . . . off the sick-list," said Walsingham, with something of animation in his still feeble voice . . . "before we go out again in force against the enemy. . . I am almost selfish enough to feel satisfaction in the thought. It would be very, very bitter to know that you were out again . . . and I here."

"But you must take care of yourself—not be too impetuous . . . you must have patience, my poor fellow." . . .

"No, no; I never was very patient," said the wounded man, "and a sabre cut or two, and a few bruises, what are they to keep me from my men more than a few days? . . We made such a wretched affair of it this morning, that I am afraid it will do none of us any good . . . I should like to know what I have been

reported in the Returns. Rowland wont tell me . . . pretends he does not know. . . I suppose it is 'dangerously.' . . . It does not much matter. . . We are not very likely ever to see a report of this affair in the Gazette."

"Better anywhere than in the Gazette," said Carrington.

"Yes . . . yes . . . and it would be a dreadful thing really to be disabled in such a business as this . . . to be shelved by wounds received in an engagement which we are ashamed to talk about, and to be cut out of a participation in more honourable affairs. These, I suppose, are the chances of war."

"Equal credit to you, my poor fellow . . . equally glorious your exploits . . . every one in camp is saying you behaved like a man."

"But what is that?" . . . another spasm of pain, convulsing his whole frame—he was a man of large proportions, muscular, sinewy. "What is that? Pleasant enough I grant, to enjoy the approbation of one's comrades—but a soldier looks for something more than the applause of the mess-table . . . he aspires to something more than a regimental reputation. My father is a very old man . . . he has served long and creditably . . . if he be proud of any thing in the world, it is of the riband at his button . . . I hoped to make him equally proud of his son . . . I did think that I might return to England with a riband at my button . . . with two letters after my name. I am sure it would have brightened up the last years of the good old man. But now . . . what avails it to do . . . what avails it to suffer, when all our doings, all our sufferings

only lead to failure—to disgrace? Our actions are not considered in detail—not considered by themselves . . . they are only meritorious so long as in the aggregate they are crowned with success . . . so long as they result in victory. I don't know whether this is right—perhaps it is. I have no doubt the matter has been well considered by much wiser heads than mine. I only say, Carrington, that it seems to me very hard. Gallantry is gallantry anywhere—suffering is suffering, no matter whether surrounded by darkness or surrounded by light. It is hard that we should be punished for the deficiencies of those above us—or for unavoidable circumstances, rendering victory beyond the reach of human power to achieve. Well, we must make the best of it—it is not our fault."

He had paused often during the delivery of this speech, which came forth in broken sentences. He was evidently suffering acute bodily pain—pain endured with the noblest fortitude—pain which, perhaps, really galled him less, was more endurable by his sturdy spirit, than the sense of the disgrace which had descended upon the army, the personal losses which that disgrace had entailed upon him. There was a little too much selfishness in the poor fellow's heroism—but it was heroism, nevertheless.

Carrington saw plainly enough what constituted the severest sufferings of the wounded man, and he addressed himself earnestly to the work of soothing the irritation, which was so intolerable to his friend. He spoke cheerfully of the prospects of recovery—the impossibility, as he said, of the Affghans carrying their

success on to the end. It was inconceivable, he repeated, that a British army, however inferior in numbers to the enemy, could be repeatedly worsted by an undisciplined barbarian foe. The reverses they had sustained were but temporary reverses. British discipline, British courage must eventually prevail... It was not possible, that the British leaders could again make such fatal blunders, as had been fallen into that morning—blunders, which would disgrace a drummer-boy, if he were to be placed in command of a force. The errors committed, as they were unprecedented, would assuredly be unrepeated. And then, with a little forethought—a little unanimity—one well-matured, vigorous movement—every man doing his duty nobly—down would go the pride of the Affghans. "Be sure," continued Carrington, "that the cloud is but a passing cloud. Monstrous—incredible, indeed, would be the perpetuation of our disgrace. Oh! we shall be out against them by and by—again and again, Walsingham... and you will be among us, my fine fellow; and then hurrah! for despatches, gazettes, brevet majorities, and C.B.'s.... Why, my good fellow, the thing is certain. As soon as ever that fine Roman hand can perform its functions again, you may write home for the star. Failure, indeed!—why this stupid business of to-day will come in as a part of the great whole of victory; as you say, and say very truly, they do not take accounts of details. Why should they?—All that we have done since the beginning of the campaign will be lumped into one great whole of victory; and then you have got your company al-

ready ... the casualties have helped you to that ... we shall see Brevet-Major Walsingham, C.B., in the army-list ... and then, when the war is over, you may take your furlough—or, perhaps, they will send you home on sick-certificate ... and how proud the old general will be!"

It was a splendid stimulant, and Carrington delightedly watched its effects, now visible in the glistening eyes, now in the slightly suffused cheeks of his much-suffering friend. He had touched a chord "vibrating sweetest measures"—thrilling delightfully through his whole soul. Walsingham had not, for some time, been so free from depressing anxieties—had not for some time experienced a state of mind so nearly a-kin to hope. "Best of good fellows," he said, stretching out his left hand, which was pressed warmly by his friend, "it is just like you, to find something consolatory in a state of things, however gloomy ... I think there is a chance that all will go well, and then, as you say ... it had not occurred to me before, but perhaps they will consider the whole affair in the gross, and reward all who have ..."

"Distinguished themselves," exclaimed Carrington, "out with the word, my boy!"

"Suffered much in the cause. It is possible," continued Walsingham, "and how my poor old father would rejoice to see his son's name in the Gazette!" ... Then after a pause, he added, speaking more slowly and solemnly ... "But if it should not happen so ... if these wounds—these bruises ... contusions as the doctor calls them—(my kind Rowland, the prince of

good Samaritans, it were something to live, if only on his account) if they should really prove dangerous . . . will you, my good fellow, Carrington, write to my father—you have seen the fine old man—and tell him, that, whatever of disgrace there may have been brought down upon the country, I did not disgrace him . . . that I did my best, as a soldier . . . that I died, as became my father's son. If you think this is truth, Carrington . . . you will say it for me—I'm sure you will . . ."

"Be sure that I will, if, my good friend Walsingham . . . if ! . . . no, I will not even look such a contingency as this in the face. You shall deliver the first part of the message yourself."

"And you may add, too," continued the sick man, not heeding Carrington's reply, "you may add, too, that I sent him, as my last gift, the sword which I carried with me in action, when I fell . . . perhaps you might be the bearer of it—circumstances might permit . . . and that would be a double kindness."

"And if I were," said Carrington, smiling, "to be the bearer of old Excalibur, I should have something to tell about the firm gripe you had taken of the handle—a gripe, which even the ponderous hoofs of the Affghan horse could not loosen. They thought that you were dead, my fine fellow, with the trusty weapon in your hand . . . yes, the general shall know it all, I promise you; and you need not die to impart the knowledge."

Walsingham was about to answer, when Dr. Rowland, who had been conversing in a low tone with

Rivers, at the other end of the room, came forward, with the intention of breaking in upon the colloquy. His patient had already exerted himself enough—more than enough. Rivers, who, though much attached to Walsingham, had thought it better to remain in the background, and to suffer the cheerful, the animating presence of Arthur Carrington, unimpaired by his habitual gloom, to do its work by the bed-side, now came forward also, addressed a few words to the wounded man, and then passing his arm through Carrington's, led him away from the bed. In another minute they were in the open air.

CHAPTER X.

THE REJECTED.

"Why, love forswore me in my mother's womb,
And that I should not deal in her soft laws,
She did corrupt frail nature with some bribe......
To disproportion me in every part."

Shakspeare.

They had not proceeded far, those ill-assorted friends, before they parted. Their course lay towards different parts of the intrenched camp. Rivers turned off towards that front of the fortifications where he knew a detachment of his own men was posted; and Carrington continued his own progress towards the house occupied by the General, thinking that, perhaps, from the officers of the staff, he might receive a commission of some importance—some detached employment requiring a strong spirit and a strong arm—the energy and activity of youth. The few recovered men of his own regiment had been employed during the day, and were now under cover. He was, therefore, to a certain extent, an independent man; but he did not desire to be an idle one; it was not a time at which any man desirous to do his duty, could think of only doing what was absolutely necessary in the regular tour of regimental performance. On he went, in good spirits, humming now and then snatches of old tunes, and

returning the necessary answers to the sentries who challenged him, in a cheerful, animating voice. Little cheerfulness was there around. The night was dark and very cold. Large, heavy clouds, portending snow, were drifting across the heavens; and the bleak wind in fitful gusts, swept cuttingly across the face of the young soldier, as he made his way manfully against the opposing element. On the distant hills might be seen many a blazing fire. The enemy were burying their dead, the corpses of those who had fallen in the morning; but still they found time, ever and anon, to send a shot or two towards the cantonments from a gun which they had planted on a spot of commanding ground.

He was not far from the general's house, when he was accosted by a Queen's officer of another regiment, who, it seemed, had been following him.

"Mr. Carrington!" Arthur turned round and confronted the speaker.

He was a short, ill-favoured man, young, but with a profusion of dark hair about his face. Carrington recognised his countenance, and as he did so, started with a gesture of surprise. The movement was not lost upon the stranger, who fixing his eyes steadily upon Carrington's face, said in a harsh, guttural voice, the voice of one rendered husky by strong emotion,

"I do not wonder at your astonishment. You are naturally surprised at so great and sudden a change in my bearing towards you . . . surprised that I, who so long have shunned you, should now intrude myself upon you."

"Why, to speak candidly," said Carrington, "I am

a little astonished, or rather, perhaps, I might have been a week ago, but strange things are turning up every hour—each one stranger than the last. And yet after all, Mr. Wilton, I don't see why it should be surprising that one brother officer should salute another at a time when a great common danger ought to make common friends of us all. I know you have always avoided me, always shunned me as though I were a leper; but upon my word, up to this hour, I am totally ignorant of the causes which have rendered me such an object of aversion to you."

"I believe you, Mr. Carrington. It was my desire that you should be ignorant of these causes. I had no wish, believe me, to insult you, no wish to give you any annoyance. I have always had a sort of respect for you, and, under other circumstances, it is probable that I should have sought you as a friend. I avoided you because your presence was painful to me—so painful that at times I hated you."

"Have I ever wronged you, ever done you an injury?" asked Carrington, who was touched by the deep feeling which his companion betrayed.

"Ever wronged me?—perhaps not; I cannot say that you have wronged me—*wronged* is not the word. Perhaps I ought not even to say that you have injured me; but when one man, however unintentionally, blasts, in the very spring of life, the budding promise of another's happiness, it is hard to say that an injury—a grievous one—has not been done."

"Blasted another's happiness! I!—What mystery is this?" asked Carrington.

"I will tell you," returned the other; "but let me know, are you on duty?"

"No," returned Carrington, "no more on duty than every man in camp. I came out to offer myself for any service that might be required of me. . . and you?"

"I have just been relieved. I have had no rest for six-and-thirty hours. Can you afford to listen?"

"Yes."

"I dare say you have often marvelled why I have so sedulously shunned you, avoided you, as I was sometimes compelled to do, in so obvious, so unmistakeable a manner—often rudely, often offensively, I am afraid, but never with the intention to wound you. The truth is, as I have said, Mr. Carrington, your presence was so painful to me, that I was glad to escape into solitude; the anguish was intolerable to me—so intolerable, that at any other time, under any other circumstances, I would have exchanged into another regiment, at any sacrifice, rather than have been constantly exposed, by remaining in the same country with you, to this ever-recurring penalty. I weary your patience, I am afraid; bear with me a little while; I almost repent me that I have forced this meeting upon you."

Carrington felt something very much like an inclination to laugh. There was a touch of absurdity in the present embarrassment, and he was about to reply to his agitated companion, with his wonted good-humoured bluntness, when Wilton seized his arm with a convulsive grasp; and whilst his whole frame seemed to be wrenched and shaken by the effort, he groaned out: "You are engaged to be married to Adela Balfour."

"To be sure I am," said Arthur Carrington.

Wilton repeated, in a less eager, but in a sadder voice: "You are engaged to be married to Adela Balfour."

"Yes, yes, it is very true, I *am*," said Carrington. "Have you any thing to say against it?"

"I should have every thing to say against it," replied Mark Wilton, "if I thought that saying would avail. But this is idle. I have intruded myself upon you, Mr. Carrington"—this with great effort—"to say nothing that is not friendly, nothing that is not conciliatory. I wish to apologise for any apparent rudeness in my conduct towards you."

"Oh! you need not apologise!" exclaimed Carrington; "but excuse me, if—"

"Ah!" interrupted Mark, "I see how it is—I am not intelligible; you do not understand me—how should you?"

"Why, to tell you the truth," said Carrington, "there is a little confusion—that is—perhaps, it is my fault, but I do *not* very clearly understand you."

"No—no, it is my fault . . . I must be more explicit" . . . speaking slowly, and still with great effort . . . "you must excuse my incoherencies, Mr. Carrington, your generous nature will make every allowance. The truth is . . . a few words will explain all, and it is well that they should be uttered, let the utterance cost what it may . . . you are engaged to be married to Adela Balfour . . . and I—I—*love her!*"

"Love her!" exclaimed Arthur Carrington.

"Yes; no words can tell how deeply. . . . Have

patience . . . perhaps you think that I have no right to use such language . . . I know not how that may be, Mr. Carrington, but there are feelings which no efforts . . . no sense of duty . . . nay, not even religion can stifle. To say that I love Adela Balfour is only to say that I live—but do not misunderstand me. My love has long been nothing else than the love of utter despair . . . suffering, suffering always . . . never hoping, never longing . . . only grieving over the extinction of my happiness. I am, I doubt not, very confused . . . but this I wish to say, that the passion which consumes me is one which can inspire none but myself . . . I cannot subdue *that*, Mr. Carrington. But there is another passion which I have subdued . . . my hatred of you. . . . I know not whether I am asking too much, but will you give me your hand?"

There was not a more generous creature in the world than Arthur Carrington. Had the man before him presented himself as a rival, had he advanced any pretensions, had he spoken boastfully of the past or hopefully of the future, the young impetuous lover would have felt a very strong inclination to smite his opponent to the earth. But the behaviour of Mark Wilton—so different from this . . . so full of humility, of contrition, confessing utter hopelessness in the presence of a successful rival, touched the honest heart of Carrington; this last appeal was irresistible; he stretched out his hand, and said, "With all my heart . . . there" . . . returning the warm pressure of Wilton's hand . . . "I am glad you have ceased to hate me. This is not a time for

enmity among brethren ; the blessing coveted by both we may neither of us live to enjoy."

"True... but do not say coveted... I hope Mr. Carrington that I have ceased to covet a treasure belonging to another, though I cannot cease to love... If I have any excuse for the encouragement... nay, Heaven knows I do not encourage it... but for the indestructible existence of the latter feeling; it is that when I loved her first... and I can scarcely remember the time when I did not love her—her affections were disengaged. I knew her... I loved her long before you had ever seen her... we were play-fellows together."

"Playfellows!"

"I was brought up at the house of a clergyman—an uncle... for my mother died soon after I was born, and my father, being in the civil service, was always resident in India... and this man—this uncle of mine, was rector of the parish in which Mr. Balfour lived. Their houses were close together—they were very intimate... and, as children, the Miss Balfours and myself were constantly together... I cannot fix the date—it was so far back—when I began to love Adela ... but I know but too well, Mr. Carrington, when I began to despair."

Arthur Carrington was deeply moved. He was silent, and Walton continued—"When I left home—when I came first to India, I was a mere boy... Miss Balfour a year or two younger... I thought then that she was attached to me... we had always been friends ... nothing could have been more kind than her man-

ner towards me . . . She shed tears when I bade her adieu . . . and I—fool that I was—mistook a childish friendship—sisterly affection . . . for the deep enduring passion of love . . . Two years passed . . . and throughout those two years, I hugged to my heart the precious thought that I was loved, that Adela Balfour would, some day, become my wife. Those two years were occupied with my voyage to India—a residence there of some sixteen months . . . and my return home on sick certificate . . . for my health very soon failed me. When I reached England, Adela was a woman, and she had seen you."

Arthur Carrington stood with his eyes fixed on the ground, and his hands crossed over the large handle of his sword, on which, the point in the earth, he was partly resting, whilst Mark Wilton continued, "I very soon found the grievous mistake I had made . . . I very soon found that childish friendship was not womanly love . . . that the esteem with which I was regarded as the playfellow of her infancy was nothing but esteem after all. It had not ripened . . . it never could ripen into love. And with womanly reserve came womanly coldness. I saw it all too plainly. I saw, too, something else still more painful to me . . . . I saw that she turned aside from me, as one whom she could not look upon with pleasure. When Adela was a child, she tolerated me because I was good-natured—because I was kind to her. She did not perceive that which as a woman was only too apparent to her—she scarcely knew that I was very ugly—very ungainly; at all events, if she did, she cared not for my imperfections—she liked

me in spite of them. But when I returned to England, she had learnt to value, perhaps some might think to over-value, personal attractions. Heaven knows, I do not think so; for there is nothing in the world which at one time I would not have exchanged for them. It is too late now—indeed, it was too late then. She had seen you, Mr. Carrington .... and I.... in truth she never cared for me after my return—never could—with this forbidding face, with these stunted limbs.... she turned away from me with aversion, and it was not very long before I learnt that she had bestowed her affections on you."

"Bless her!" exclaimed Carrington, involuntarily. The words were uttered ere he could suppress the ejaculation.

"Amen!" ... with much fervour .... "Amen!" repeated Mark Wilton.... "believe me, Mr. Carrington, I shall never cease to bless her. I thought it right that I should tell you all this .... at a time when God only knows how soon we may all meet one another, where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage, it were indeed criminal to harbour other thoughts than those of charity and love. I have, I hope, wholly subdued the bad passions which were rioting within me. I hope you will be spared—I hope that you will be happy. Time was when it would have been a consolation to me to see you fall beneath the blade of the Affghan. That is past. I have said enough—you have given me your hand—you are in perfect amity with me."

"Most perfect," ... again extending his hand. "Forget the past ... you may yet be very happy. You take

far too gloomy a view of the matter—you do, indeed."

"Ah! it is well for you to say so. You mean it kindly, I know—but do not again talk about forgetting. Perhaps, indeed, I hardly wish to forget. I am sure that I would not wish her to think that I had forgotten. Tell her—is it asking too much of you—tell her, if I should fall, that I bore her in kindly remembrance to the last. Will you tell her this?"

"I will . . . do not go yet. I have one more word to say to you. Henceforth, let us meet as friends. I mean, Mr. Wilton . . . do not avoid me as before—let us meet with every outward indication of the kindly feelings which you have promised to encourage. I hope that we may both of us be spared to appreciate —to esteem one another."

"I will do my best, I will, indeed," said Wilton, "it is hard to say, after the occurrence of this morning, what may not be in store for our unhappy force; but should it escape utter annihilation . . . should it be decreed by an inscrutable Providence that while I survive you perish, I might . . . what I mean to say, Mr. Carrington, is this . . . is there any thing you would intrust to me . . . is there any thing of which I might be the bearer . . . I would stand pledged . . . it would be regarded by me, as the most solemn obligation ever imposed upon man to deliver it in safety. Think of this . . . it may be worth your while . . . and now God be with you, Carrington."

He walked quickly away, and his figure was soon

lost in the thick darkness. Carrington remained motionless for a while.

"Yes," he said to himself, "I will trust him. . . Poor fellow!—I pity him from the very bottom of my heart. To have lost such a girl as Adela. I may as well have two strings to my bow. If Witherington's Affghan fails me, why Wilton may do the job. Slender reeds to rely on, truly!—a defeated rival and an Affghan dog! Which is the most likely to render me this great service? Well, I'll put them both to the test."

Raising the point of his sword from the ground, into which it had been driven to the depth of some inches, and resting the blade across his left arm, as he grasped the heavy handle of the trusty weapon, Arthur Carrington walked on.

"Ah! those Affghan rogues," he muttered to himself, "have no sinecure out there . . . plenty of corpses to bury, and, oh! before the month is out, God grant that they may have thousands more!"

* * * * *

A little before midnight, Arthur Carrington was at Captain Witherington's quarters. The Captain was sitting at a camp table, on which were a pair of candles, an inkstand, a piece of wax-cloth, a ball of thread, a pair of scissors, and a couple of large packing-needles. The wax-cloth was spread out, and in the centre of it, folded into small dimensions, ready to be encased in the protecting envelope, was the will, which Carrington had signed a few hours before. Near the table, with hands crossed before him, and eyes on the ground,

stood a tall, well-built, good-looking Affghan, dressed in the ordinary costume of the country, but with no other arms about his person, than a large-bladed knife in his girdle. He was evidently waiting for orders.

"Well, Carrington," began Captain Witherington, as soon as Arthur had entered the room, "brought your letter—eh? I am very glad, indeed, that you did not allow your prejudices to stand in the way of your availing yourself of so excellent an opportunity of sending a letter down to the provinces; I take it for granted, you see, that you have taken my advice."

"Yes," producing a letter, "here it is. There can be no harm trying at all events; and if the letter is opened by the Affghans, it will puzzle them to get at the sense of it. My beautiful hand-writing sometimes bewilders even our own people." He dropped the letter on the table as he spoke.

"This will never do," said Witherington, taking up the letter, "you must reduce its dimensions. Why, you might almost as well send your dressing-case down at once."

"It is but a brief one," resumed Carrington, with an air of disappointment, "I have not said very much."

"You might, I doubt not, have said twice as much in half the space; I know your gigantic scrawl of old—but I only mean that you must fold up your letter into a smaller space, for it is to go into this piece of wax-cloth, and to travel in Afzul Khan's turband."

The Affghan, hearing his name mentioned, raised his eyes from the ground—large, bright eyes, but rather soft

than penetrating in their brightness—and Captain Witherington, addressing him in Persian, eked out with a few explanatory words of Pushtoo, told him that Carrington had written a letter to his betrothed, which was to be enclosed in the same parcel with the captain's own letter, and to be entrusted to his care. A smile of pleasure lighted up the handsome face of the Affghan, as he made a salaam to Carrington, and replied, that he would never lose the parcel but with his life.

"It may be our last hope," said Carrington, as he refolded his letter, "I am almost beginning to despond myself. There is no energy left in high places. I have seen to-night enough to disgust any man. My zeal is almost gone, and all I look for now is *bed*."

CHAPTER XI

INFIDELITY.

> "And then, love's old end, falsehood—nothing worse—
> If one did thus, was it from vanity?
> Or thoughtlessness? or worse? Nay, let it pass.
> The beautiful are never desolate,
> But some one always loves them."
>
> *Festus.*

EDMUND BALFOUR had determined not to communicate to Adela the alarming intelligence he had received—not, at least, to allow the entire truth, in all its aggravated horror, to be revealed to her. Fortunately, she was not one to be easily alarmed. She had a sort of general sense of the danger of war; but as she had never troubled herself much to inquire into the particular character of the war in Affghanistan—as she knew little about the country, little about the people, little about the political events which had disturbed the one by exasperating the other—she did not think that there was any thing of a very extraordinary character in the simple fact of there being (for this much of information could not be shut out from her) a good deal of fighting going on in the countries beyond the Indus. This, indeed, she regarded as a mere matter of course. She had no other idea of a soldier than of a man, whose business it was to fight; and, as she thought much

more of the glory than of the peril of this sort of occupation, her imagination was rather pleased than otherwise, by the reflection, whenever she did reflect at all —that her betrothed was earning for himself laurels to grace his young warrior brows. There was something rather soothing to her vanity in all this She never doubted that the result must be victory—fame of some kind or other; her ideas were, to be sure, a little confused on the subject; but as Christian knights, in all songs, ballads, tales, and romances, with which she had any acquaintance, always did crush the Paynim pride, and return to Christendom in triumph to claim their betrothed brides, she had not the slightest doubt that her knight would follow the same excellent fashion.

This, in many respects, was fortunate. Edmund Balfour had not come to the determination of concealing the truth from his sister, without taking into account the peculiarities of her character and disposition. Had she been of a more reflecting—a more inquiring nature; had her mind been quick to apprehend slight hints and to draw therefrom important deductions; had her heart been easily stirred by trifling indications of coming danger; had she been prone to forebodings of evil; had her love been of that quick, sensitive, apprehensive kind, which marks every shadow cast before, and which never ceases to be disquieted until security is rendered doubly secure—until every doubt is wholly dispelled; he would not have made an effort to lengthen out the term of her ignorance, for he would have known that it could not succeed. But Adela—there was not, perhaps, another girl in the world on whom such an experiment as he

was now entering upon was so likely to be brought to a favourable issue.

There was, however, one inconvenience in this, and to Balfour an extremely painful one. Adela, not being aware that Carrington was in any real danger—not contemplating for a moment the possibility that the insurrection at Caubul might already have proved fatal to him—made no sort of difference in her behaviour, but went on, from day to day, in the same volatile, impulsive manner; following always the humour of the moment, subjecting herself to no restraints; often frivolous, always capricious, and seldom either saying or thinking much about Arthur Carrington at all. Could he but have seen something like sobriety of demeanour in his sister, he would have been comparatively happy; but although he was not so unjust as to forget for a moment that he himself was the cause of apparently the worst feature of her present levity, he could not help being greatly shocked by the harsh contrast between her conduct and her actual position, as seen through the unclouded medium of his own knowledge of affairs. The transfer of the family from Calcutta to Titaghur Balfour had considered a most judicious movement, not only because it appeared to him that, in this comparative seclusion, there would be much less likelihood of the mournful truth reaching his sister's ears, but because being thus removed from the vortex of society in which lately she had been whirled, there was little chance of her making, publicly at least, those painful exhibitions to which we have just alluded. And at

first, indeed, he had reason to congratulate himself on the success of his machinations. Adela, like most people who are very animated in society—who effervesce under the excitement of crowded rooms, flaring lamps, and flattering conversation—was not seldom, in the quietude of the domestic circle, very flat—very vapid; sitting silent—it would be harsh, perhaps, to say sullen—whilst others were talking around her; and scarcely taking any interest in what was going on at home. She evidently seemed to think it very dull at Titaghur; often said as much to her sister, and sighed to return to Chowringee. But this state of things did not last very long. Titaghur, though sufficiently far from Calcutta, is unfortunately close to Barrackpore; and Barrackpore is not only a large military station—the head-quarters of the presidency division of the army—but the country residence of the Governor-General of India. Short-lived, therefore, was the seclusion of the Balfours. Their retreat was very soon discovered, very soon intruded upon. They had some friends—many acquaintances in cantonments; and morning visitors soon began to flock in, to the mortification of Mrs. Balfour and Mary, but to the manifest satisfaction of Adela, who found the quietude of their country life, as we have said, insufferably *triste*. At these morning-visits it required all the womanly tact of the former, to turn the conversation away from the insurrection at Caubul, in sufficient time to prevent, in Adela's presence, a full revelation of the actual state of affairs. All this was very harassing; but there were greater trials in store.

Captain Danvers, the aide-de-camp, was frequently at Barrackpore; and when there, he rarely allowed a day to pass without paying a visit to the Balfours. His visits were very long ones—sometimes so long, that Mrs. Balfour was compelled to ask him to stay to tiffin —an invitation which was never refused. There was a billiard-table at one end of the room in which they lunched (which was a spacious hall); and the captain had undertaken to teach Adela to play at billiards. The young lady was very willing to be taught. She was an apt pupil, and her master was greatly delighted with the progress she made. It was not a bad sort of occupation for an idle man. Teaching, in the abstract, is any thing but pleasant—to teach lubberly boys vulgar fractions or Greek articles, in spite of the poet's declaration, Captain Danvers would have considered the most *un*-"delightful task" in the world; but to teach a beautiful, graceful girl to make cannons and hazards upon a slate table was a different sort of thing altogether; and, in the estimation of the aide-de-camp, any thing but thankless drudgery. Very pleasant was it both to master and to pupil—but painful to Mary, painful to Ellen Balfour, who were, one or other, necessitated to look on whilst their sister was playing and laughing, and giving a far too attentive ear to the foolish flattery of the captain. And sometimes Danvers came to dinner. He was very lively, very amusing; he talked well after his kind; his conversation was not that of a thinking, well-informed man, but he rattled away on common topics with an immense deal of animation, sometimes said a smart thing without effort, told a good

story with sufficient relish, and paid a compliment as skilfully as any man in the country. Nothing of this was lost upon Adela. She liked to be amused. It was never at all *triste*, when Captain Danvers was one of the party. Even the family dinner went off pleasantly when he was permitted to join it. And then, after dinner, there was always music. Adela was invited to the piano, where the captain selected the pieces, turned over the pages of the book, and never failed to applaud the performance with an enthusiasm, which, perhaps, was not wholly assumed. Altogether, in Adela's opinion at least, he was an immense acquisition.

And then there was very soon another valuable accession to the Titaghur party. Young Mr. Lorimer, who had brought out a letter of introduction to Edmund Balfour, from an old and much-esteemed friend, received an invitation to spend a few days in the house—an invitation which was accepted with great alacrity. In his case, as in Danvers', Adela was the main attraction. In the language of the young gentleman, as used in a confidential *tête-à-tête* with an old college friend, in whose presence he affected nothing and he concealed nothing, Adela Balfour was "great fun." He went to Titaghur, therefore, with the laudable intention of amusing himself. At any other time, perhaps, he would not have taken this step; but Calcutta had become insufferably dull. A general gloom had diffused itself over the surface of society. Party-giving seemed to be at an end, though at the very beginning of the cold season. The doors of Government House were closed; the saloons of the Town Hall were silent. No public entertainments

were projected, and no benevolent individuals seemed inclined to mitigate the evil by giving a series of private *soirées*. Every thing was most unseasonably sombre; and if it had not been for an occasional cricket-match, Mr. Lorimer would, as the very outset of his career, have run a risk of expiring from *ennui*.

Thus circumstanced, the young gentleman very wisely determined, that, as he had nothing to lose by leaving Calcutta, he would make a trial, at all events, of the rustic delights of Titaghur. Accordingly, he accepted Balfour's invitation, with something almost amounting to eagerness; sent his horses down under care of his grooms, and his wardrobe under care of his valet; and availed himself of Balfour's kind offer to drive him down in his buggy.

Between Captain Danvers and Mr. Lorimer, Adela found her time very pleasantly engaged. One or the other was constantly beside her—sometimes she was rendered doubly fortunate by the assiduous attentions of both. Danvers was some three or four years older than the young civilian, but in experience of the world, and especially of that most important component of it, womankind, he was at least ten years his senior. When they were together, it was only the coquetry of Adela, which gave young Lorimer a chance. The attentions of Captain Danvers were prized as those of a fascinating man, whilst Lorimer was merely regarded as a good-natured agreeable boy. Still the boy had his uses; and Adela never intentionally betrayed the preference which she felt—never allowed the aide-de-camp to be aware of the higher price which she set

upon his attentions. Her knowledge of human nature was not very profound; but there are few things which young ladies upon entering the world sooner learn, than the art of playing off one admirer against another. The first page in the encyclopædia of the heart which they study, is that which contains the word *pique;*—at least so it was with Adela. She knew that if Danvers felt that he had the race to himself, he would immediately draw rein, and slacken in his exertions. To be beaten by a green-horn like Lorimer, would, indeed, have been an ignominious defeat. Adela had the sagacity to perceive that, in all human probability, some such thought as this would be operative in the captain's breast—some such motive would impel him to exertion. She, therefore, appeared to estimate highly the attentions of young Lorimer—always listened deferentially to what he said—replied to him with animation—showed by a thousand pretty little unmistakeable manifestations, that she took pleasure in his society—and whilst she was flattering his vanity, piqued that of the more experienced Danvers. And the result was just what she anticipated. The aide-de-camp had far too good an opinion of himself, to believe it possible that such a girl as Adela Balfour could very long continue to prefer a stripling like Lorimer to a moustached hero like himself. All experience set at defiance the probability of such a preposterous mistake being persevered in. Lorimer, to be sure, had long acquaintance upon his side; but this was a common-place advantage, which could not very long operate in his favour—it

must yield very soon to the superior attractions of the gallant A.D.C. So on he went, with redoubled energy—sparing no trouble, neglecting no art—and really exhibiting an amount of industry and ability, which, exerted with a better object, would have been worthy of respect, if not of admiration.

And Arthur Carrington—poor Arthur Carrington! What place, all this time, did he occupy in Adela's thoughts—what place in her affections? Very little place, we fear, in either. In truth, she was in a most dangerous position—every thing was against her. Every adventitious circumstance seemed to be unfavourable to the perpetuation of her first love. It would have been something, if her brother—if her sister, could have been constantly talking about Arthur Carrington—constantly bringing her mind back from any temporary estrangements, to dwell upon her absent lover. But this was not permitted under such circumstances as then existed; it was the endeavour both of Edmund and Mary Balfour to keep her mind from turning towards Arthur Carrington—to keep her from asking questions, which it would have been difficult to answer—from seeking information which it was not desirable to afford. They, therefore, in Adela's presence, seldom named her betrothed; and after a little while, they found that there was small danger to be apprehended from the affectionate inquisitiveness of their sister. Their motives were the best—the kindest. It did not occur to them, that by avoiding one danger they were rushing into another, and that the Sylla was less terrible than the Charybdis.

And so, in process of time, Adela Balfour almost ceased to think of Arthur Carrington—or, rather, ceased to think of him with pleasure; for there were times, when o'er the bright rippling stream of present enjoyment, a dark chilling shadow would pass, and she was recalled, with a sudden spasm of pain, to the recollection of her true position. She had been very young when she had plighted her troth to Arthur Carrington—very young, and she had seen little of the world. The conviction would sometimes force itself upon her, that she had done a very foolish thing—that she had, indeed, thrown herself away. To do her justice, it must be added that she had no sordid thoughts of wealth—that the idea of an establishment of more or less magnificence never crossed her mind, when she found herself weighing the advantages of the *might be* against the *is*. In truth, she was a great deal too careless and indifferent about these things—a great deal too ignorant on such subjects—ever to take the matter of her mode of life, after marriage, into consideration. Perhaps, she scarcely knew that in marrying a subaltern officer, with a very small private income, she was condemning herself to a life of much personal privation—that a married officer's quarters, in a row of oven-like barracks, were altogether very different places to live in from her brother's splendid mansion in Chowringhee. She had never weighed such consequences as these, when she accepted Arthur Carrington; and now that she knew but one style of Indian life, it never occurred to her that there might be another. In Adela's infidelity, therefore, there was nothing of this worst description of

meanness. It was, indeed, that common infidelity of the heart—the decline of a love not strong enough to bear the trial of long absence—to resist the seduction of present pleasures, in the hope of ultimate reward. There was one present pleasure, the attractions of which, Adela, of all people in the world, was the least powerful to resist—the intoxicating joy of ever-flattered vanity. Vanity has destroyed more than the sword—it utterly destroyed Adela Balfour.

It is true that if any one had accused her of infidelity to Arthur Carrington, she would have denied the imputation with a becoming energy of scorn; and yet, if she had studied her own heart with a sober, serious sincerity of purpose, scrutinising with greater closeness every trait which she felt a natural inclination to slur over in the introspect, she would very soon have arrived at the conviction that the time had come, when her thoughts of the connexion existing between herself and Arthur Carrington, were moulding themselves into the form of *regret*. She was, perhaps, scarcely conscious of this, for it had not assumed the distinct, well-defined shape of an integral thing to be apprehended at a single glance—a thing ever present in clear, unmistakeable proportions, not to be turned away from, not to be shut out—but was made up of a number of small components, one intruding upon her here, another there; but all settling down at last in their proper places, and making up that great whole of regret. With such splendid opportunities—so much admired, so much courted—what might she not have done had she arrived in Calcutta without an engagement—free to

choose from among the scores of suitors who, she felt assured, would have presented themselves, had not cruel circumstances shut out all hope? The image of Arthur Carrington was waxing dim in the retrospect—she saw around her handsome faces, beaming with admiration; the honeyed language of insidious flattery was melting in her ears, and *his* voice, for her at least, was silent. There were those present to amuse, to delight her—to add to her daily stock of pleasurable excitement; and Arthur Carrington—why, he had not so much as the power to send her a single letter.

There is safety in numbers. Had Adela Balfour only viewed these distracting influences in the aggregate, it is possible that no greater harm than a little temporary estrangement from the memory of her absent lover—a slight unsettling, as it were, of her affection, might have been the result: but she had very soon learnt to segregate; she had singled out one from the many; there was one to whom her thoughts most often turned—whose society was most attractive—whose flattery was most welcome; who, in her estimation, was the handsomest, the cleverest, the most thoroughly delightful of all her new friends. This favourite was Captain Danvers. She liked him better than all the rest; and for this reason, as we have already said, she endeavoured to secure his attachment by occasionally calling in the agency of *pique*. The gentleman was, at least, as vain as the lady; and he was more heartless.

The captain had a favourite Arab horse, a gentle and docile creature, named *Fairy*, for it was a light,

fairy-like thing, and as much like the unseen creature it was named after, as any animal of this solid order can very well be expected to be. He had often asked Adela, who was an excellent horsewoman, and had once or twice ridden out with her brother on the Course, to try his little favourite, assuring her that it was the most tractable creature in the world—that a child of five years' old might manage him; and she had more than once, when in Calcutta, given *her* consent, but failed to obtain that of her brother, who had objected, very unreasonably, as Adela thought, to her riding any horses but his own. Now, however, at Titaghur the request was repeated, and new arguments were very speciously set forth. Calcutta was one place, Titaghur another—premises of so unquestionable a character, that it was impossible to demur to them. Her brother might not like her to ride on a strange horse among a throng of equestrians on the Calcutta Course, but there were such quiet, secluded places about Titaghur, where she could always ride in perfect safety. Indeed, Barrackpore Park itself was a very safe place, and a very nice place for an evening ride—there could not be a nicer place; so different from the crowded and dusty Calcutta Course—he was sure Miss Balfour would like it so much—might he not be permitted to send over *Fairy* some afternoon, and he would certainly be in readiness at the appointed time to escort her.

"Oh! yes," returned Adela, in reply to the captain's most convincing display of rhetoric. "You may cer-

tainly send *Fairy;* I should like to see *Fairy* . . . but as to the rest . . ."

"I will take my chance," said Danvers . . . "If you only see *Fairy* with the side-saddle on . . . only let my head syce—an excellent trainer—show you how gently the little thing canters . . . what pleasant paces, so tractable, such a mouth . . . I am sure that all the rest will follow."

"We shall see," said Adela, with an arch smile, and Captain Danvers was satisfied. He promised to send the horse to Titaghur on the following evening.

And on the following evening, as Captain Danvers having despatched *Fairy* an hour before, in charge of his syce, was riding into the compound of Balfour's house, he met Adela riding out of it, attended by Mr. Lorimer. She rode a light bay Arab—but it was not *Fairy*.

It was a new purchase of young Lorimer's. The horse had just been sent to him from Calcutta; it was a well-known animal, had carried more than one lady, and been generally acknowledged to be gentle as a lamb. Lorimer had been very urgent—very persuasive. He was sure that *Fairy* could not carry her half so well—half so safely. It was all very well for Danvers to talk, but he knew nothing about the horse, as a lady's horse, and then it was so seldom ridden, that it was sure to be very fresh—a great deal too fresh for safety. He should be very sorry to see Miss Balfour on such a horse. Now his own was one of acknowledged reputation—had been constantly ridden by a lady—had recently been the

property of Mrs. Grover, whom every body knew to be very nervous. She would be so safe on his little Arab. And she consented. It was not very difficult to persuade her—not because she was at all afraid of *Fairy;* but because she was beginning to be rather afraid that *Fairy's* master was growing a little confident, and might, therefore, as a natural consequence, become less assiduous in his attentions—less energetic in his efforts to please. She thought that she would pique him, and she succeeded. He *was* piqued, annoyed, offended. As he was riding into the compound, he met Miss Balfour and young Lorimer riding out of it. He did not express any annoyance; nor did his countenance betray any. He drew up—exchanged a few common words of salutation with Adela and her companion, and then saying that he wished to speak to Balfour on his return from office, before dinner (he had been invited to dine at Titaghur), rode on towards the house.

He had nothing particular to say—it was a mere pretext. There had been for some days no fresh intelligence from Affghanistan. Government was much harassed, much perplexed. It was so difficult to know what to do in such a conjuncture. Still there was hope—the suddenness of the outbreak appeared to have paralysed the military force at Caubul, but the paralysis could not be more than temporary. There would—who could doubt it?—be a renewal of the vital energy thus a little while suspended. So said Captain Danvers to Edmund Balfour, as they strolled about the garden—the latter in no very pleasant frame of mind. He was annoyed at the thought that Adela had gone out on a

strange horse, to ride alone with a thoughtless youth, like Lorimer, and the annoyance he felt, though scarcely embodied in words, was sufficiently palpable to the A. D. C. It was just what Danvers wished to see. Perhaps, he had himself conduced somewhat to the desired consummation by hinting that though Lorimer's new purchase was sufficiently quiet, the animal evinced a disposition to "say his prayers," in a manner somewhat prejudicial to the safety of the rider. It might have been a fact; it might not. The captain certainly did not know that it was one.

CHAPTER XII.

SYMPATHY.

" And she spake such good thoughts natural as if she always thought them;
And had sympathies as ready, open, free as bird on branch."
Miss Barrett.

Balfour had brought Herbert Grey with him, that evening, to Titaghur. The next day was to be a holiday—the government offices all closed, and the civil servants emancipated from desk-thraldom, to the great contentment of their minds and equal refreshment of their bodies. It was not a thing to be confessed by two grave philosophers and earnest philanthropists like Edmund Balfour and Herbert Grey—but we should be wanting in candour if we did not acknowledge that our friends were never less inclined to quarrel with the institutes of Hinduism than on that evening, as they drove out of Calcutta, with the certainty of not returning to it, for at least six-and-thirty hours. The native holiday, whatever may have been the history of its institution, was to them, at least, so real and palpable a blessing, that they must be forgiven if they could not wish to see it swept out of the calendar for ever.

And as Edmund Balfour strolled about the garden conversing with Captain Danvers, Herbert Grey strolled

also about the garden, in conversation with Mary Balfour. Grey's good fortune was greater than he had dared for one moment to anticipate. Mrs. Balfour had taken the children out with her in the britzka, and Mary, thinking that her brother would come down from Calcutta alone, and certainly not expecting that Captain Danvers would be walking in the Titaghur compound, instead of riding in the Barrackpore park, had remained at home to be a companion to Edmund on his arrival, and to report to him the progress making in the garden, before it became too dark for him to see how the Cape seedlings were beginning really to come up at last, and how this or that plant from the Botanical gardens was fast recovering from the perilous effects of transplantation. Adela and young Lorimer, as we have seen, were riding out together in the Park—and, therefore, who was there, as the aide-de-camp had so opportunely appropriated Edmund Balfour, to interrupt the *tête-à-tête* between sweet Mary and Herbert Grey?

And it was a very pleasant *tête-à-tête*. They strolled together along a walk, which ran parallel to the course of the river, and some way—that was Herbert's doing—from the circle which the other pair were describing at the same time. A very pleasant *tête-à-tête*; so much delightful converse, so much harmony of sentiment, so much in the opinions expressed by each for the other to admire; so much re-awakening of long dormant feelings—feelings dearly cherished, but, for lack of sympathy, suffered to slumber for awhile; so much that was really excellent in the convictions they expressed, and so much simple natural eloquence in the language ex-

pressing them; so much, indeed, that none but kindred souls climinate, and that only when sound principle is combined with a high order of intelligence—when the mind is richly furnished, and the heart is stored with still better things.

At first they talked about the garden, and what a pleasure it was to watch the growth, the full development from the seed to the perfect flower—not in a large garden, Herbert Grey said, but one so small, that it was possible to take a distinct interest in almost every flower—at least in every group of flowers; and Mary Balfour quite agreed with him, saying, that without this power of individualising, a garden were nothing more than a pretty scene, pleasing to the eye, to be taken in at a glance; and that it little mattered, then, whose garden it were—a stranger's yielding as much pleasure as one's own. But a garden, they both said, the components of which had grown up under their eye, each several flower having its own pleasant recollections associated with it—having been individually an object of interest and care, was so peculiarly one's own—almost created by one's own hands—a thing in which we take a personal pride—a thing not to be contemplated without the recurrence of a host of pleasant memories and pleasant hopes. And Herbert Grey spoke of the difference between the flower-garden in India and the flower-garden in England, acknowledging the inferiority of the former, but questioning whether any gardeners could take more pleasure in their flower-beds, than the Indian amateurs, who, permitted by the climate to be so little abroad, enjoyed, in

proportion to its rareness, the delight of tending the plants reared in their little garden-plots. And from the garden they turned—an inexhaustible subject—to the beauty of the evening scene; the broad rich shadows, the bright river, the dark outlines of the boats; and as they walked along the river side, watching the many-fashioned craft gliding down the stream, a new turn was given to the conversation by a very simple, trifling occurrence. Mary struck one of her feet against something which lay in her path. Looking down to see what it was against which she had stumbled, she perceived that it was a human skull. She pointed it out to her companion with something of a shudder.

Herbert smiled. "Is it the first unsightly remnant of mortality on which you have alighted?" he asked.

Mary replied in the affirmative.

"Then you have been very fortunate, I assure you," returned Herbert Grey... "I wish I could flatter you with the hope that it will be the last. Perhaps, it is as well to accustom yourself early to these unpleasant sights; they will very soon cease to shock you. This garden is so very near the river, that I have little doubt it is a perfect Golgotha;" and as he said this, he led Mary a little way off the path, and there, on the grass, beneath a tree was another skull; and presently they saw a third—and a fourth.

"I am quite convinced," said Mary, "without going further—I dare say you think me very weak, but I cannot quite look upon these things, without being a little shocked. It is the strangeness—the novelty of the sight—I remember now that, the other evening, I

saw, from the verandah, the children rolling about some great white balls, and I could not think what they were. The little things must have been playing with the skulls. Is there not something shocking in such a picture?"

"To your English feelings, I doubt not—here we are familiarised to sights which at home would fill us with dismay. A dead body floating down the Thames—or deposited by the receding tide on its banks—would excite a sensation for miles along the river . . . put the whole neighbourhood in a ferment. But here we see such things every hour, and soon cease to look at them twice. The river, you must understand, Miss Balfour, is the great cemetery of the Hindus. They are deposited there, even before life is extinct, that they may receive, from the holy water of the Ganges, the extreme unction, which is to ensure them eternal felicity. The tide carries them off, perhaps before the breath is out of their bodies—or it may be that the vulture and the jackall are fighting for their prey, before death has fairly turned the breathing body into carrion."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Mary Balfour.

"It is dreadful," returned Herbert Grey, "but time renders tolerable what at first we cannot see without loathing. I have no doubt that your brother finds himself necessitated to pay a man—one of the very lowest—some rupees a month, to keep the banks of this part of the river free from such revolting deposits, as otherwise would constantly be left along the margin

of your garden, perhaps under the very windows of your house. But for the aid of a man of this class, you would see much more terrible sights than these blanched skulls, which have been brought hither by the jackalls and Pariah dogs. Do you remember the description in the *Siege of Corinth:*

"'He saw the lean dogs beneath the wall,
Hold o'er the dead their carnival,
Gorging and growling o'er carcass and limb.'

"Not much of a *carnival*, I should say," continued Herbert... "but there is wonderful truth in the whole description... not a pleasant one, so I will not quote more ... but so faithful in all its details. How genius ever shows its strength in the fidelity of its word-painting—making pictures, the truth of which, though we perceive it not at first, we come to recognise and appreciate in after days, when our experiences are enlarged! ... The 'vulture flapping the wolf,' is so graphic—a picture in a few words. It is not one of the least advantages which we derive from a residence in the East, that we learn to appreciate much, before inappreciable, in the writings of the greatest poets—especially in the poetry of the scriptures." He was glad to turn away from the unpleasant topic on which they had been conversing.

"That I find it very easy to believe," returned Mary Balfour, "and what joy it must be, ever and anon to see, in the page of nature, what before we had only seen described in the pages of the poet—to learn suddenly how really to appreciate the truth of pictures,

which we had before only imagined to be truthful—suddenly to have the truth-like converted into the true."

"A pleasure which you must have tasted," said Herbert Grey, "or you could never have described it so well."

"Tasted . . . oh! no . . . nothing at least, more than a slight foretaste . . . enough to make me understand your allusions. On board-ship . . . we do not, it is true, see very much there . . . little but the alternations of sky and ocean; very beautiful, it is true, and adding much to one class of experiences—but it was not any thing in the sky or ocean which gave me my first taste of this rare delight. I was looking over the gangway, one fine bright day nearly a calm, soon after entering the Indian ocean, when I burst out, clapping hands very foolishly . . . making quite a simpleton of myself . . . you would have laughed at me, had you been standing by . . .

"'And the flying fish leap
From the Indian deep,
And mix with the sea-birds half asleep.'

I saw them do it—Shelley's picture to the life! There were the sleepy-looking, heavy sea-birds floating drowsily on the surface of the slightly undulating water, and the brisk, glittering little flying-fish dashing in suddenly amongst them, so full of sparkling life."

"Yes, I have seen what you describe," said Herbert Grey, "but my ignorance caused me to lose the pleasure which you enjoyed. I have not remembered the passage you have quoted, if I have even read it.

Shelley must have drawn his illustrations from books. It is a faculty of genius not only to gather up, for future reproduction, images from the actual world—not only to hive the honey which it has itself collected, but to hive that which has been collected by others. . . . A poet cannot explore the whole world in search of images; but he can avail himself of the discoveries of others, and travel round the globe by *proxy*. It is in the readiness with which it apprehends, and the fidelity with which it applies these collected images, that true genius ever shows the quality of its fine gold—leaving no room to question its genuine character—no room to doubt the sterling nature of the ore. How unlike the counterfeit! . . . In many so-called oriental poems . . . I speak, too, of poems which have enjoyed a large share of the world's favour—there is not even a tinge of orientalism. . . To accumulate knowledge is one thing; to render it one's own by due apprehension is another. . . You are startled sometimes by the exceeding truth of the scenery—of all the picturesque adjuncts which illustrate the descriptive writings of true genius. You marvel how such knowledge can have been acquired without long personal acquaintance with the scenes depicted, and are almost induced for a time to believe that the writer has really visited the country in which his fancy has been at large—has really seen with his own outward eye, what has been so clearly visible to the eye of his imagination. And whilst the extreme unreality of poems professedly oriental—unreality which must be patent to the understanding of every reader of intel-

ligence, whether he has resided in the East or not—is so apparent in works of great pretension, we sometimes stumble, with delight, in lesser works, on passages conveying such truthful impressions of many of the most remarkable characteristics of Eastern life, that it is long before we can persuade ourselves that the writer has not long been personally familiar with what he describes so well. Alfred Tennyson is a writer of this class. There is an extraordinary reality in his pictures. He describes in a few words—with the least possible effort—scenery and climate better than any poet; better, at least, than any with whose writings I am acquainted, Miss Balfour. We feel the heat—the glare—the oppressive heavy damps, as we read some of his smaller poems. Though he pretends only to describe these things as they exist in Europe, there are some of his descriptions which would make the fortune of the professed oriental poets. Take for example the poem of 'Mariana in the South.' The scene is laid in the south of Europe—it is a hot, glary, fierce day — the very description scorches one. I wish I could remember the entire poem, it is so very true throughout There are some passages which, to be duly appreciated, ought to be read in Calcutta some four months hence, when the hot weather has fairly set in; nothing can be more Indian than the picture of the house:

"'With one black shadow at its feet,
The house through all the level shines
Close-latticed to the brooding heat.'

"Nothing more true than the description of the day,

which 'increased from heat to heat'—'the steady glare without'—nothing better than the lines—

> "'And all the furnace of the light
> Struck up against the blinding wall.'

"You will recognise the truth of this, Miss Balfour, if you ever venture abroad before sunset, during the months of April or May—

> "'And all the furnace of the light
> Struck up against the blinding wall.'

The blinding glare, the refraction from our white walls, is, I assure you, something terrific in the hot weather. And then the rains—commend me to Alfred Tennyson for a description of our rains. It is difficult to believe that he has not himself enjoyed the delights of a still steamy evening in Bengal, at the end of July.

> "'The air is damp, and hush'd and close
> As a sick man's room when he taketh repose,
> An hour before death;
> My very heart faints, and my whole soul grieves,
> At the moist rich smell of the rotting leaves.'

If you are here, Miss Balfour, next July, or August, with so much greenery about you, you will know, I fear, only too well, what it is that grieved the whole soul of the poet. Our climate is now very delicious; let us enjoy it whilst we may, and not think of what is to follow."

"That is the true philosophy," said Mary, smiling; "let us not only enjoy it, but make good use of it whilst it lasts. It is only during this cold weather, I suppose . . . but let me first thank you for your scrap of criticism . . . we come out to India with very, very mistaken ideas, not only of the country itself, but of the people who

live in it—all classes, Mr. Grey, the European as well as the native inhabitants. Very great injustice is done in England—a little time ago I myself was very unjust—to society as it exists in India. It is supposed that here you are much more unenlightened, much more irreligious, much more immoral, than people of the same rank of life at home. Now, as far as my own observation has extended, there has appeared to me to be as little ignorance and as much religion as can be met with, unless under a combination of very favourable circumstances, within an equal space at home. I have found many of the gentlemen with whom I have conversed in this country, remarkably well-informed; and it seems, too, that most of the families with whom we are intimate, are composed of really excellent people."

"I am so glad to hear you say so," exclaimed Herbert Grey . . . "but you must not think that we are all of us equal to your brother—must not take him, and Dr. Christian, and our friend Winter, as average specimens of European gentlemen in India. As regards information, since the establishment of regular steam communication between the two countries, we have no longer any excuse for ignorance. We have no right, in Calcutta, to be more than six or seven weeks behind our brothers and sisters in London. We have more leisure for reading than the majority of people in England, who work for their daily bread; we are seldom called upon to consider the relative advantages of a new book and a country ride. We are so little out of doors, that books constitute our principal source of recreation;

and new books are as plentiful in Calcutta—I speak, of course, with regard to the extent of the community—as they are in any town of England. Then there are our newspapers . . . why, no man could possibly read them attentively, without making a tolerable acquaintance with the literature and science of the western world, in all their rapidly progressive stages. At this time of year, we have necessarily less leisure for study, as it ceases to be a pain to venture before sunset into the open air."

"A life of action then succeeds to a life of study," remarked Mary. "It is at this season of the year that you are able to do what before you have been contemplating—abroad in the world, you are able to put into practical execution the designs which you have been forming in your closets. Is it not so, Mr. Grey?"

"I wish I could answer you," said Herbert Grey, smiling, "in the manner in which your enthusiasm would be best pleased by my answering you. You deserve, I am sure, a more encouraging reply than I can offer you, dear Miss Balfour, without departing from the truth. It is undeniable that we are able to do all this—if we only have the inclination. The opportunity is granted to us, if we would only rightly use it. I wish I could say that we are but seldom neglectful of these opportunities. That the cold weather is the time for action we all know, and many of us turn it to account as such. But to what account? It is the time for hunting—for hog-spearing, or as it is more elegantly called, 'pig-sticking'—for snipe-shooting—for horse-racing—for cricket-matches—for pic-nics—for balls—

for amusement of every description; but I cannot honestly say that there are many of us who look forward to it, as the season in which we are again competent for a little while to extend the sphere of our usefulness—to do, as well as to give—to inquire into the best means of ameliorating the condition of the multitudes by which we are surrounded, and to institute, under our own personal superintendence, proceedings, calculated to conduce to this great end."

"But there are some—there must be some," said Mary, eagerly . . . "if not many, there are some."

"Doubtless there are some," returned Herbert Grey, "and when I say that there are not many, I say it not as a reproach peculiar to our state of society . . . In this we differ not from the rest of the world. It is not peculiar to us to seek for happiness in self-gratification—to be more eager to amuse ourselves than to do our duty to our neighbours. It is something to be able to say, that in our small community there are some, who look upon the cold season as a time to be set apart for active well-being—that, if not many, there are *so* many, inclined to turn the season to good account."

"Such men as Dr. Christian," said Mary.

"Yes . . . as Dr. Christian—men, at least, resembling him in kind, if not in degree—for in degree, he stands almost, if not quite alone. With intellect that would adorn any society, he unites the most devoted zeal in the Christian profession—the profession of the Christian minister—the Christian missionary. His energy—his activity would be extraordinary in any country, in any climate; in this country, in such a climate it is most

extraordinary. He never wearies of well-doing; he never slumbers, he never rests. The implements of his craft are ever in his hands—but those implements are of varied shape, meant for varied purposes; his labours are multiform, but they are all directed to the same great end. I know some excellent men, whose views being narrow and prejudices strong, contract the limits of their usefulness by confining themselves to one field of operation, in which they labour diligently, but with no very important results. They recognise but one legitimate line of action; Dr. Christian recognises many. The Pulpit, the School, the Printing Press—he sees in these so many mighty instruments by which, in due course, the enlightenment of the Heathen may be accomplished, and an infinity of temporal good achieved, whilst this great revolution is being matured in the womb of time. Others, as I have said, recognise the Pulpit alone as the authorised Christian weapon—they think it sufficient to *preach* the gospel. I am afraid that very little can be done yet awhile by direct preaching . . . we must employ the School and the Printing Press, or we shall accomplish nothing."

"How very, very much must the school achieve," exclaimed Mary. "I have been thinking of this almost ever since I first arrived in the country, and since we came here I have been vain enough to think that I . . . pray don't laugh at me . . . . might in my very limited sphere do a little good, by helping to establish a school in this neighbourhood. I have discovered, Mr. Grey, that the poor must have Education brought almost to their very doors, or they will not take the trouble to

possess themselves of the blessing. They will not go far in search of it. I suppose it is the indolence of the people that operates so banefully . . . it is an evil to them to be compelled to move . . . absolute quiescence is the *maximum* of Hindoo happiness. There must be some very palpable present advantage to induce them to walk two or three miles. There is a school, as you know, Mr. Grey, very near this . . . in the corner of Barrackpore park, established by the Governor-general, the ladies of whose family, I am delighted to hear, take a great personal interest in it. I have been more than once with my sister—Mrs. Balfour—to visit this school—one of the teachers, a very intelligent man, who, fortunately for poor ignorant me, speaks and understands English perfectly, tells me, that though a considerable number of children from the immediate neighbourhood of the Park-gate attend it daily, it is difficult to induce them to come from the other side of Titaghur . . . a school is, in fact, wanted a little way from this . . . lower down the river . . . where there are some extensive villages . . . and my brother has kindly . . . so like him, the best, the most generous of brothers . . . he has promised me that the school shall be established, if I will only do something towards it myself."

"Then I am sure it will be established."

"I hope so . . . for," she added, playfully . . . "I shall consider that I have done something, if I only enlist your services . . . and I think . . . I think I may venture, Mr. Grey . . . to believe that in such a cause, you will gladly lend me a helping hand . . . say you will . . . do, say you will, Mr. Grey."

And Herbert Grey said it—and so emphatically too, that it would have been impossible to question his sincerity. He never made a promise in his life with such hearty good will.

He seemed to enter into the project—nay, he did enter into it with his whole soul—earnestly, delightedly. It was such an excellent project; so worthy of Miss Balfour—He would do every thing in his power; there was nothing which he would not do... They must set to work very systematically—begin from the very beginning... the beginning, he said, was always, or ought always to be a school-*house*—or before that even, *a site*.

Mary had chosen a site, and more—she actually had a school-house—the four walls of one at least—a building, very conveniently situated, the property of her brother's landlord, who had placed it at Balfour's disposal for the purpose of establishing a school on his estate. This was a great point gained... The next thing to be done was to put the whole building into good repair—to exclude the cows and goats, who had been fain to take possession of it—and to cover it with something like a roof, sufficient to keep out the falling rain and the vertical sun.

This Grey undertook to do... "I shall be here," he said, "all to-morrow..."

"All to-morrow—oh! how glad I am!"... She checked the too open manifestation of delight, and added, more soberly, "It is a holiday, I suppose?"

"Yes,... and therefore not a very good day for our operations—but yet, I dare say that I shall be able to do something... we must prepare the building with all

possible despatch, and whilst the work is going on, we must be searching for proper teachers . . . I will consult Dr, Christian—he, I am sure, will aid us. We shall find his advice invaluable. No one knows half so well how to manage these matters, and no one is half so ready to give his assistance as well as his advice. I suppose that some of your brother's servants know where the future school-house is."

"Yes—the old white-whiskered sirdar-bearer; he knows the building very well."

"Then he shall show me the way there as soon as it is light to-morrow."

"I cannot thank you sufficiently," said Mary Balfour, "so very kind of you, Mr. Grey, to interest yourself in my school. . . I call it my school, you see—Edmund says it is to be mine—that he intends me to have all the trouble. I am glad of it . . . and yet not all the trouble, whilst I have so many kind friends around me. . . I assure you I am very thankful. . . I knew *you* would help me in such a good cause."

Poor Herbert Grey! It was not the goodness of the cause that rendered him so willing an ally, but the sweetness of the advocate. He would, we sadly fear, have entered into an alliance with Mary Balfour in a much worse cause than that of the education of the Hindoos. It was very pleasant to be thanked so cordially by such lips; very pleasant to see such a prospect opening out before him; very pleasant altogether, that walk up and down the garden path, along the banks of the river, as the shades of evening thickened

around them, and little more could be seen on the broad surface of the Hooghly than the lights in the boats which floated rapidly down it.

So entirely pleasant, that Herbert Grey, you may be assured, did not hear with much complacency the sound of carriage-wheels which announced the return of Mrs. Balfour—so pleasant, that even that lady's gentle voice, as it syllabled the word "Mary," grated almost as harshly on his ears, as the grating noise of those carriage-wheels.

The *tête-à-tête* was at an end . . . in another minute there was a large party gathered together on the lawn. Mrs. Balfour, and Edmund, and Captain Danvers had joined—we had almost written—*the lovers,* but we have not ventured yet to explore the recesses of the lady's heart. Presently Adela made her appearance, leaning on Mr. Lorimer's arm. The little Arab had behaved very well. Danvers was disappointed; the animal had not once gone down on its knees. He, however, asked no question about the ride, and expressed no opinion. Balfour was equally silent. Had it not been for Mary's sisterly kindness, Adela would not have extracted from one of the party an indication of the slightest interest in the history of her ride. The gathering was soon broken up; the dinner hour was approaching, and there was the toilet to be performed.

* * * * * *

Captain Danvers, who had little more to do than to substitute a red staff-jacket for his blue frock-coat, and to arrange his curling hair, his unexceptionable

whiskers, and his undeniable moustache, was the first to make his appearance in the drawing-room. Having seated himself on a couch, he was turning over the pictures of the "Book of Beauty" for the ensuing year (then just arrived in Calcutta), when Adela entered the room. She immediately seated herself beside the A.D.C. on the couch, and asked him why he had not given her the honour of his company in the Park.

"I thought it was not wanted," said the captain, throwing something very much like feeling into the tones of his voice.

"How could you be so foolish?" said Adela, "you know that you are always welcome."

"Not always," said Danvers, without raising his eyes; "not always;" with something like a sigh.

"Yes, *always*—how can you be so foolish. I wished you very much to accompany us—but you would ride the other way. I assure you we had a delightful ride."

"I do not doubt it. I do not doubt that it was very agreeable. I should not have rendered it more so—and I never wish to be *de trop*. To be sure, I did, at one time," continued the A. D. C., gravely, "think of turning back, in case—in case of any accident, seeing how inefficiently you were protected. Boys ride very well sometimes, but they cannot often do more than manage one horse at a time."

"I wanted no help, I assure you... *Firefly* was so steady."

"*Fire-fly!* I shall not again think of sending *Fairy* to Titaghur. I was altogether under a mistake... I thought—but no matter ... I shall not trouble you any more."

It was very excellent acting, and it succeeded passing well. Adela began to think she had gone too far; that it was time now to do something to "lure her tassel gentle back again;" so she said: "Captain Danvers, I hope you art not angry—I fear I have offended you—I did not mean to hurt you, I am sure—say that you are not angry."

He lifted up his eyes ... there was something like sadness in them. "I am not angry," he said.

"Nor hurt—say you are not hurt, Captain Danvers; *do*."

Danvers was silent.

"*Do*, Captain Danvers—dear Captain Danvers, say that you are not hurt—that I have not given you pain ... It was very foolish—very wrong in me. I ought to have ridden *Fairy*"—and she laid one of her little hands upon the A. D. C's, as she spoke.

Danvers pressed the small fingers, and said, still with some sadness in his voice: "I cannot quite say that I was not pained ... but you who gave the wound know well how to apply the balm ... Your last words have done much for me."

"I am very sorry, I assure you," resumed Adela, not withdrawing her hand, "to have given you pain even for a moment.... You must not think that I would rather ride with Mr. Lorimer than with you ... He is a very

good-natured boy—and I like him ... But I am sure, you know that ... " What it was he knew so well did not appear, for at that moment Mrs. Balfour entered the room, and the "Book of Beauty," on the captain's knee, became at once the subject of discourse.

Adela scarcely bestowed a word on young Lorimer throughout the evening.

CHAPTER XIII.

WORK.

"What are we set on Earth for—Say, to toil—
Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines
For all the heat of the day, till it declines......
The least flower with a brimming cup may stand,
And share its dew-drop with another near."
Miss Barrett.

THE following day was spent in a manner very satisfactory, at least to one of our friends. Herbert Grey had, perhaps, never been so happy in his life before. The sun had scarcely risen, when, attended by the old gray sirdar, he was examining the dilapidated edifice, which was to be converted into Mary's school-house. He found that at no very great expense, it might in a short time be put into sufficiently good repair, to answer all the purposes required of it. He was extremely anxious to commence the work at once, and, in spite of the impediment of a native holiday, he made such good use of his time before breakfast—did so much in the neighbouring villages, purchasing bamboos and other matërials, and collecting workmen, by promises of an increased rate of pay, that he had the pleasure—and it was not an insignificant one—of assuring Mary Balfour at the breakfast-table, that the improvements were actually begun. And then after breakfast there was so much to be said—so much to be done. It was a bright,

joyous, sparkling day in December, with a cool, fresh, northerly breeze, sweeping across the wide bend of the river between Titaghur and Barrackpore. It was so cool, indeed, that as soon as the meal was over, the whole party seemed to be moved by a simultaneous desire to seek the sunny side of the house, and to bask in the open verandah. Adela declared that her feet were "perishing," which, indeed, would have been a sad pity, they were so very pretty; and having been supplied by Mr. Lorimer with a chair, and a foot-stool, sat with them, thrust out into the warm sunshine, whilst one of the pillars of the verandah effectually shaded her face. Mrs. Balfour began to play with one of her children; and Edmund, Mary, and Herbert Grey, walking up and down the long verandah, talked about the garden and the school, and determined to make the most of the delightful weather, and the welcome—most welcome holiday.

And presently Edmund Balfour, snatching up a Dutch hoe, which he saw in the portico, and calling for his broad-brimmed, white hat, sallied forth into the garden to give some directions to the *maullees.** In a minute or two afterwards, Herbert Grey was sitting in the drawing-room beside Mary Balfour, with inkstand and paper before him, helping her to make divers calculations relating to the expenses of her school, to draw out a scheme of education, and to make a list of the school-books which it would be desirable immediately to purchase. There was no difference of opinion between them regarding the expediency of introducing

* *Maullees*—Native Gardeners.

Scriptural histories, or even the Scriptures themselves, if there were any boys sufficiently advanced to read them, among the other class-books, though there was to be no direct religious teaching. Herbert Grey never had been—even before events had fully developed the absurdity of it—a friend to the plan so greatly favoured in high places, of *tabooing* all Christian literature in educational institutions, founded by Christian men; and Mary Balfour was delighted to find that there was a prospect of her school doing something, indirectly at least, to educate the hearts, as well as the heads of the people, by whom she was surrounded.

The scheme, thus concocted, looked marvellously well on paper; and it might be doubted whether Mary Balfour or Herbert Grey took the greater pleasure, the greater interest, the greater pride in the project. Mary was full of thankfulness—said that she did not know what she should have done, but for the assistance of so experienced an ally; her brother had left the whole thing so entirely to her, declaring that he would do nothing to help her, except by supplying the necessary funds;—he wished to see how much a woman could accomplish; he thought the experiment might be a valuable one. It was very hard upon her, Mary said—quite enough to confuse so weak a little head as hers—but now, just as she was beginning to despair, matters had taken a favourable turn, and every thing would be sure to go well, though Edmund's experiment, she was afraid, would not be very fairly put to the test. Herbert Grey said that he had really done nothing more than offer a few common-place suggestions; and that for

any real, useful, practical assistance, she must look to his friend, Dr. Christian, who would, he was sure, be able to smooth every difficulty, to overcome every impediment—difficulties and impediments were to be looked for—and set the school fairly afloat.

"And what do you call real, useful, practical assistance," asked Mary, looking up into Herbert's face with a bright smile; "if building a school-house be not an indication of it? I am sure that nothing can be more useful, nothing more practical. You do not call this a mere suggestion?"

Herbert said it was what every body could do—that nothing could be easier than to give orders to a workman.

"What every body *can* do," said Mary, "is not what everybody *will* do; the easiest things are those which are most frequently left undone. It was very kind of you to take so much trouble—doubly kind, because, as you say, the kindness was one which any body might have performed. These very kindnesses are the least frequently performed, because there is nothing ostentatious in them, there is no *éclat* to envelop them. I dare say," she added, laughing, "that if I had asked him, Mr. Lorimer would have favoured me with a 'scheme for the education of the Hindoos,' in fifty or sixty folio pages . . . but to go out, in a morning fog, to hunt for carpenters and bricklayers in a dirty village, is altogether a different affair."

So it is. Mary was very right; but still Herbert Grey protested that he had done nothing, and that the fair founder of the school must reserve her grati-

tude for Dr. Christian, who, he was sure, would earn it by some more important service than the collection of half-a-dozen workmen.

Mary was about to reply, when Edmund Balfour entered the room. It was so pleasant, so delightful out of doors, he said, that he really thought Mary could not do better than put on her bonnet and come out with him into the garden. He was sure that Grey would come too. He wished to ask her advice concerning the laying out of some new flower-beds; and he proposed, that after giving the necessary directions, they should walk on slowly towards Mary's school-house, and see what the workmen were doing. Mary started up immediately. No proposition could have been more welcome to her—none more welcome to Herbert Grey. In a few minutes they were all equipped, and in the garden. The bearer who started off after them, with a large *chattch* (umbrella) for the protection of Mary's pretty little head, was dismissed. It was really a privilege to be able to go out of doors free from all the pomp and circumstance of servants and umbrellas. It was quite the perfection of a day—clear, bright, beaming; but with a dry, crisp, bracing air.

The embryo school-house was situated on a plot of grass, at the junction of two roads, about half-a-mile from the confines of Balfour's garden grounds. The roads skirted, as they were, with luxuriant greenery—large heavy-leaved shrubs, thick clusters of untrained creepers of rapid growth, falling in picturesque masses from the broken stems of trees, or shooting out wildly on every side in search of support, with here and there

tall bamboo hedges almost meeting over head—led to some adjacent villages, from which the pupils were to be drawn. The edifice itself was a mere shell—there were four brick walls with many a breach in them; and nothing more than the remnant of a roof. It had once, doubtless, been a comfortable abode for man ; it was now an indifferent retreat for cattle.

Well pleased was Herbert Grey, as the little party approached the spot, to see that the men, whom he had collected in the morning, were busily employed. There were a number of bamboos on the grass; and a couple of men, seated on their haunches, were cutting them with hatchets; whilst three or four diminutive bullocks were trailing through the dust further supplies of the same useful material. At the other end of the old house, a load of new bricks had been piled up; the hackery, or common cart of the country, in which they had been brought, resting beside them, whilst the unyoked cattle reposed drowsily on the soft grass.

The *raj-mistries*, or bricklayers, had erected their rude scaffolding of bamboo and rope-work, against one of the walls of the building, and more than one chasm had already been filled up from the pile of bricks. A respectable-looking native, with more white linen in his turband than could be found about the bodies of all the other men, was superintending the work. When he saw Herbert Grey and his friends approaching, he made a respectful salaam, advanced to meet them, and began volubly to report progress.

Mary Balfour was delighted. She could not have

been more happy, if the workmen had been erecting a palace for her accommodation. It was so real—such visible, undeniable progress, that even Edmund Balfour, who had often bantered his sister, declaring that she would never achieve any thing more than a paper school, could not help admitting that this was "something like business:" but added, laughingly, that it was Grey's work and not her own.

This Herbert denied. It was so unfair, he said, not to give her credit for whatever she could achieve by means of an alliance, so entirely the result of her own kindly enthusiasm. Balfour might as well say that the work was not hers, because she did not cut the bamboos, or mix the mortar, with her own little hands. "Qui facit per alterum facit per se." Her influence had done every thing. It was her will that had set every thing in motion.

Balfour smiled; he was almost as glad as Mary herself to see the progress that was making; doubly glad when, on communicating to a group of quick-eyed boys—who, with wondering faces and glib tongues, had assembled about the old building, staring first at the workmen, then at the *sahib-logue*,* and asking each other what was going on—the important fact that a new school was to be established there, he elicited from them many expressions of satisfaction, of desire to attend it when ready for their reception. The satisfaction expressed was echoed by two or three old men, who had also been looking on in wonderment; and when Herbert Grey, officiating as

* *Sahib-logue*—Gentry.

interpreter, explained to Mary what both generations had been saying, the pleasure which she derived from her benevolent undertaking reached even a still higher pitch, and forthe time at least—every thing else forgotten—she was completely happy.

For the time—it was a happy day. Happy, happy Mary! Happy, happy Herbert Grey! Oh! that there should have been a morrow.

A morrow, and a very dull one. The great house at Titaghur seemed very empty—very desolate. Mrs. Balfour acknowledged this to Mary—Mary acknowledged it to herself. Adela grumbled, too; it was very *triste*. Mr. Lorimer had become almost a bore, and she was rather glad, than otherwise, that he was to return to Calcutta on the following day. Why did not Captain Danvers come more frequently? She was almost afraid that she had gone too far—that, although he had declared his willingness to forget what had passed, she had really given him serious offence. Perhaps, however, he was only waiting for the departure of young Lorimer. There was some comfort in that.

But the day, dull as it was, had its end—and another—another—and another. Nothing of any moment occurred, except that Captain Danvers did call, paid very long visits, and certainly betrayed nothing at all like annoyance. He was quite himself again—amusing in general conversation; something more, when Adela was the only listener.

Four or five days after that pleasant holiday—it was Christmas eve—Edmund. Balfour brought Dr.

Winter to Titaghur. Mrs. Balfour and Mary, who were in the verandah when the buggy entered the compound, were a little disappointed, perhaps, at first, when they discovered that the second gentleman was not, as they divined, Herbert Grey—but still they welcomed the good doctor with genuine cordiality, and were really delighted to see him. Mary, though her acquaintance with him was but of short standing, quite regarded him as an old friend. Not a very good substitute for Herbert Grey, but as good an one as could anywhere be found; and in himself a most worthy man, one whom she greatly respected and esteemed.

Mary bore her disappointment with exemplary fortitude, but it was a very severe trial. She had reason to expect that Herbert Grey would have come down that evening with her brother. Edmund had told Mrs. Balfour that he intended to invite Grey to join their family party at Christmas—indeed, that it was almost settled that he should come—and this Mrs. Balfour had, in due course, imparted to Mary. Balfour on the preceding night had slept in Calcutta, so that the ladies had not ascertained whether the arrangement had been concluded—but something or other made Mary quite certain that he would come; and yet, instead of Herbert Grey, there was sage old Dr. Winter. It would have fared ill with the poor doctor had *some* young ladies been subjected to this disappointment—there would have been nothing better for him than cross looks and cold words; but Mary was all sweetness, all kindness. Poor Dr. Winter!—he, at least, was not to blame.

At dinner the truth came out. Mary Balfour had

not dared to ask the question; but she felt certain that the cause of Grey's absence would soon transpire. And she was right; for they had not very long been seated at the dinner-table, when Dr. Winter observed; "So our friend Grey has run away from us."

Mary said nothing; but she felt that she had better not look up at that moment, lest her face should communicate more than she wished to avow. Mrs. Balfour, however, exclaimed, in accents of surprise: "Run away from us!"

"Yes; has not Balfour told you that he has taken his month's leave, according to regulation, and started off, up the river? I don't know whether his leave is in orders; but he has actually started in anticipation of it, for he knows that it has passed."

"And where is he going?" asked Mrs. Balfour.

"I do not quite know," returned Dr. Winter. "He does not himself know, I believe. He told me yesterday that he was going to start on an 'educational cruise' with Dr. Christian. Christian, I know, is going to take advantage of the vacation in Calcutta, to visit some of the Mofussil schools—or rather, I believe, to inquire into the state of education along the banks of the river between this and Kishnaghur, to ascertain in what parts there is the greatest destitution—and at the same time to recruit his own health, for he sadly overworks himself. He starts the day after to-morrow; but Grey has gone on in advance, has hired a pinnace for a month. They are to meet at Hooghly, I believe."

"But not," said Balfour, turning to Mary, "before

Dr. Christian has looked in upon your field of labour. He has promised to make this his first halting-place, and I have no doubt you will find him a most valuable ally."

But Mary—she was perplexed, embarrassed; she could not even think of her school—of Dr. Christian's visit—with pleasure. "Why," she asked herself, "why should *he* have passed Titaghur—why not meet Dr. Christian here—why avoid us in this way? Actually to pass under our very windows—to leave our neighbourhood without a word! He might have accompanied Dr. Christian, and yet spent his Christmas with us."

Poor Mary Balfour—Poor Herbert Grey! Cheerless the Christmas Eve at Titaghur to the one—more cheerless to the other, in his solitary boat on the dark waters of the Hooghly.

The ready apprehension of Mrs. Balfour had not suffered her to remain very long in ignorance of the clue to the seeming riddle of Herbert Grey's unexpected conduct. No sooner had Dr. Winter ceased to speak, than the truth flashed upon her. She remembered the conversation which had taken place, on the evening before the arrival of the vessel which brought Adela and Mary to Calcutta. Almost every word that was spoken on that occasion, sounded again in her ears. How true the vaticinations of her husband! True, as regarded Adela; true, as regarded Mary; true, as regarded Herbert Grey.

As soon as they were alone together, she communi-



cated her suspicions to her husband. She said that she suspected Herbert Grey had run away from Mary Balfour.

"And I," said Balfour, "do more than suspect; I *know*. It is very true, my dear Ellen," he added, "he *has* run away from Mary; he told me so. The fact is, that I dined with him last night—dined with him in his own house. I thought then that he would come here with me, this evening. I had before invited Winter, but there is room enough for both in the house, and he can always horse his own carriage. Well, I was going to say that I dined with Grey—a *tête-à-tête* dinner. He appeared to be in wretchedly bad spirits—but he said nothing, until the cloth was removed, and the servants all departed; he then told me, in most melancholy accents, that he was very sorry to say that he could not accept our very kind invitation to spend Christmas with us, as he was going to Hooghly on the following—that is, *this* morning. He then proceeded to say that he had applied for leave of absence, and had obtained it . . . not in orders yet, but a private intimation . . . for a month; that he considered it his duty, apart from all considerations of the brotherly friendship existing between us, to state what were his motives for leaving Calcutta. The truth, he said, was, that he had seen too much of my sister Mary—too much for his peace of mind. Since his last visit to Titaghur he had become convinced of this. He ought not, he said, to have made that visit. He was not vain enough to flatter himself that he was otherwise than an object of

indifference to her—he meant indifference, as to any tenderer affection than common esteem, cherished towards him as her brother's friend—still his demeanour towards her, when they met, could not fail to be such as to render his attentions to her such attentions as no man in his situation ought in honour to pay to any girl. Then he spoke of his embarrassments—the fearful incubus of debt—the utter impossibility of his extricating himself, for a year or two, at least, from his difficulties; declaring that he could never bring himself to make one wilful effort to win the affections of my sister, until he was in a position to offer her an establishment, such as befitted her condition. All this, and much more . . . He would not listen to what I said—my words of consolation were thrown away upon him. He *would* leave Calcutta. It was the best thing, he said, that he could do, all circumstances considered. Not that he expected—not that he hoped to forget Mary—but he wished her to forget him . . . even as a friend. A month, in this respect, would do every thing; and at the end of that month, he hoped that circumstances might occur to remove him altogether from Calcutta. Time, he said, would relieve him from his present difficulties. It was impossible that such a thing could happen; but if, out of any extraordinary contingencies, it should arise that Mary Balfour were still Mary Balfour, at the end of two years, he hoped then to be able to present himself, as a man not cursed by the leprosy of debt, ever rendering himself a thing to be avoided."

"Poor Mr. Grey! . . . I am very, very sorry!"

"And I. You know that I have all along had my fears. We must see what we can do. Matters are not quite so bad as he thinks them. And Mary! What thinks she of him?"

"I do not think he would find it very difficult to persuade her to love him," said Ellen Balfour.

CHAPTER XIV.

EVIL TIDINGS.

"Each new morn
New widows howl; new orphans cry; new sorrows
Strike Heaven in the face."

Macbeth.

Dr. Winter was a decided acquisition to the party at Titaghur. He was so kind to every one—so uniformly cheerful and agreeable—he had so much to say, and that much was so well worth saying, that even Adela acknowledged that he was "really a very nice old man." She never had much taste for old men; they were so ugly and so prosy; but *for* an old man, she really thought that Dr. Winter was a very passable sort of person. It was a pity, she said, that he talked so much about education and sanatoriums, and took so much interest in those stupid black people. She wondered that *they* could interest any body: but for the rest, he might almost be considered an agreeable man; as little prosy as most people whom she met in this part of the world.

Mary greatly enjoyed, because she felt that she profited by, the companionship of the good old man. Dr. Winter was constantly by her side—constantly conversing with her. She felt that she grew wiser—that

her store of knowledge was increased—her experiences extended—her sympathies enlarged—as she listened to him. He was so full of information—of information derived from books, from conversation, from travel. He expressed himself always with great perspicuity, made difficult questions clear to the understandings of his hearers, and by the abundance of his illustrations rendered even the dullest subject an interesting one. But this was not the only, nor, indeed, the chief charm of his conversation. The clear head did much; but the warm heart did more. He was so tolerant—so charitable—so full of sympathy. In all that he said, he evinced so much genuine kindliness of heart, and so much sound Christian principle, that Mary Balfour liked him better and better every day—listening to him with profound attention; drawing forth, by brief pertinent questions, new stores of information; ever showing herself ready to be his companion, abroad or at home; and never hesitating to acknowledge the obligations under which she considered his condescension had placed her. Winter thought that the condescension was on her side; he was proud, indeed, to have such a pupil.

And the school—Mary found in Dr. Winter a most willing associate, a most efficient auxiliary. He was as much pleased with the project as Herbert Grey had been; and as anxious to advance it. Now that Grey had left her, she wanted such an ally. There could not have been a better substitute; one more enthusiastic and more able was nowhere to be found. He had the will and the power to do much; and accord-

ingly the good work rapidly progressed. Fortunate Mary Balfour, to make so many friends—to find so many allies, in such an useful undertaking! The building advanced steadily towards perfection; Dr. Christian had paid his promised visit to Titaghur; and instituted inquiries in the neighbouring villages, found that pupils in abundance would be forthcoming as soon as the school was ready for their reception, and nominated an upper and an under master, from among the many well qualified and well principled young men who had been educated under his superintendance, in the General-Assembly's schools. Every thing, indeed, was working most satisfactorily towards the consummation of Mary's hopes, and even Edmund Balfour acknowledged that a young lady, fresh from England, with nothing but good intentions to support her, might achieve something if she would. "Provided always," he added, maliciously, "that she can find such auxiliaries as Dr. Winter and Mr. Grey."

Delightful as was all this in itself, it could not make Mary happy. It could not make her happy, but it saved her from being miserable. She had much—very much to distress her—sorrows of sympathy, sorrows of her own. There was one huge omnipresent cloud ever hanging over her head—ever throwing a shadow o'er her path—ever wearing her heart with fear. She was painfully aware of the true condition of affairs in Affghanistan; though every thing had been concealed from Adela, nothing had been concealed from her; and her mind dwelt, with trembling apprehension of the worst evil, upon the horrors of that winter insurrec-

tion. Often and often, when Adela was wrapt in profound sleep, did she lie awake, thinking of Arthur Carrington, and the perils with which he was surrounded—nor of him alone; her sympathies took a wider scope—she trembled for the out-numbered troops, vainly fighting for their country; and her heart grew sick with fear, as she thought of the most wretched condition of the women and children, shut up in the Caubul camp, exposed to all the horrors of war—the rigours of winter—perhaps the approaches of famine. And Adela, too, poor Adela, how the sisterly heart of Mary Balfour grieved for her—grieved over her errors—her wayward folly, her vanity, her wilfulness. It was dreadful, indeed, to watch from day to day, her increasing levity of conduct, and that, too, at a time when perchance, the mangled body of her all but husband, was feeding the birds of prey. Where would all this end? There were times, when she almost thought that the death of Arthur Carrington, on the field of battle, would be a less sorrowful consummation, than his return to witness so sad a sight as the thing that Adela had become.

And then her own sorrows—Herbert Grey, whither had he gone; why had he left his friends thus suddenly, without a word of explanation? She felt that she had no right to ask the question even of herself; and yet her heart was constantly suggesting it.

Balfour had given orders that his newspapers should on no account be sent to Titaghur; but Mary, day by day, on her brother's return from office, had taken the opportunity, when Adela was absent or engaged, to

ascertain from her brother the character of the latest intelligence received at the Presidency. Nothing had ever been received of a nature calculated to allay her fears; and she had learnt to put the question to her brother, with all the fortitude of despair, which prepared her to hear, without a shock, the never-varying intelligence of evil. But now that Dr. Winter had joined, for a while, the party at Titaghur, she was able to derive from him the latest news, before she could receive it from her brother. His papers were brought to him regularly; but they never went beyond his own room, and there, when he had perused them, they were very carefully concealed. He was generally the first to appear in the breakfast-room, and there Mary often met him, before Adela had joined the party—before the family had assembled for morning prayers. How ardently Winter longed to be able to communicate something to still the tremulous lip—to tint the pale cheek—to clear the dewy eye—with which, morning after morning, that sweet gentle-hearted girl inquired the news from the beleaguered city: and how he loved her for her tenderness of soul! Did he love her as a father? We shall see.

One day—it was a board-day—Dr. Winter, at an early hour, had proceeded to Calcutta on official business, and it was evening before he returned. Mrs. Balfour and Adela were in the park; Balfour and Mary in the garden—the former having returned from office but a few minutes before the doctor, who, on leaving his carriage, went forth to seek them. They were examining some plants, which had recently been trans-

planted; and as their backs were turned towards the house, they were unconscious of Winter's approach, until he was close behind them. Mary was speaking to her brother; she appeared to be answering a question, and said something about the flowers having been sent them by "dear Dr. Winter"—"Dear Dr. Winter." He could not be mistaken; he heard the words plainly enough.

And when Mary turned round, as presently she did, she blushed—very slightly—but still she blushed, as her eye fell upon Dr. Winter. His ears had not deceived him, neither had his eyes. He heard and saw most distinctly what it rejoiced him to hear—to see.

Still he did not appear to be in good spirits. He answered Balfour's questions somewhat vaguely; his thoughts appeared to be wandering. Something had obviously gone wrong with him—something unpleasant had transpired during his visit to Calcutta; and it was not very long before Edmund and his sister were made aware of what annoyed their friend.

"So provoking—so very provoking," said Winter, in a tone of voice, and with an expression of countenance widely different from his usually calm, philosophic manner: "Things happen most inopportunely sometimes; but it is foolish to complain. I am sorry to say, Balfour, that I shall have to leave you to-morrow—or if not to-morrow, very early on the following day."

"That is, indeed, provoking," said Balfour; and Mary's sweet voice added the word "Very." There was then a call for explanation from both; they would not believe that he was really going—there must be

some mistake. They had expected him to pay a much longer visit.

Winter said that he had not paid them such a very short visit; but that he could be unconscionable sometimes, and, to speak candidly, he had intended to inflict his society upon them a little longer; he had enjoyed himself so much; he had been so happy—but his happiness was now prematurely to end. He had that day received a letter from Dinapore, written by, or rather at the request of, the wife of an old friend—a lady with whom he was himself personally acquainted, and in whom he took considerable interest. The lady was a Mrs. Witherington. Her husband, he was sorry to say, was in Caubul—a captain in one of the cavalry regiments. Mrs. Witherington had been very ill—she had recently been confined—perhaps care and anxiety had brought it on; but she had sickened, and the child had died; anxiety upon anxiety, grief upon grief, enough to wear her down to the grave. Change of air, change of scene had been recommended as advisable, as essential. It had been suggested that she should proceed to Calcutta, there to seek further advice, and to be ready, in case of a recurrence of the feverish attacks which constituted her malady, to proceed for a short while to sea. This, it seemed, she had protested against; but she had consented to come down to Calcutta, and had asked him to receive her.

It was very unlike Winter, to speak of this as an annoyance. It was his nature to rejoice when such an opportunity of doing an act of hospitality, an act of charity, was afforded him. But at such a time, even

his philosophy, his genuine kindliness, was not proof against the present temptation. His virtues were but human virtues, after all; respectable, as humanity goes, but not perfect in the abstract. Winter, even in this case, could do the unselfish thing; but he could not divest himself of all selfish feeling.

"I have, of course, written," he said, "to say that my house is at her service, and that I shall be ready to receive her. My letter, in all probability, will not reach her, though I have addressed it to Burhampore; for she was to have started immediately after the despatch of her friend's letter (which had been waiting for me a day or two), and at this time of year the passage down the river is rapidly accomplished. I may expect her to reach Calcutta in two or three days from this time, and I have some preparations to make. It has happened very inopportunely; but I must make the best of it.... and, indeed, after all, it is very selfish to grumble.... I ought to be ashamed of myself."

"You will be very glad," said Mary Balfour, "you may not think it, but I am sure you will be very glad when once you have returned home. I know you too well not to think that you will be happier there than here."

Winter shook his head sorrowfully, and Mary continued: "You do yourself a very great injustice. I am sure you will find abundant recompense for any little sacrifice you may be called upon to make, in the thought that you are doing an act of charity to one almost, if not quite, a widow. Oh! how I do feel for those whose husbands and brothers are in Affghanistan; happier they

who are themselves at Caubul, whatever danger may compass them about. Is there any fresh intelligence of the state of our poor people to-day?"

"Reports—reports .... I have heard only reports," said Dr. Winter ... "and they are very, very bad. It is said that they are negotiating with the enemy—that they are about to ... to ... capitulate. I am an old man, Miss Balfour, my fighting days are over ... but the word almost sticks in my throat."

"And will they be more safe?" began Mary.

"No," interrupted her brother—"I fear that safety is not to be found in capitulation. I have hopes that they will not capitulate—that they will accept no dishonourable terms. The envoy is not a man to disgrace us ... a high-souled, courageous fellow, his energy rises with the occasion; and he has good men about him, who will never counsel a craven course. I have hopes that he will not capitulate. I know the man too well—I honour him too much. He will not capitulate so long as his military associates are willing to fight."

"But what," asked Winter, "if the military chiefs are willing to fight no more? So runs the story in Calcutta. It is said that the military chiefs have recommended a capitulation. What, then, can the envoy do but endeavour to save as much human life as he can, in the best manner that it remains to him to accomplish it. Well, well, we must not be uncharitable; we must judge no one harshly. It is easy, very easy to talk—easy to say, easy to think, that we would have done this or that. Obstacles look small at a distance, or, perhaps they are not seen at all. In Calcutta people talk very

vehemently about what ought to have been done . . . but they are not in a position to form a correct opinion on such a subject as this. I have no doubt it will be found that we have judged our unfortunate brethren somewhat harshly."

"It appears to me," returned Balfour, "that we are much more inclined to deplore than to condemn. Sorrow and not indignation is the prevailing feeling. There is an universal gloom diffused over society; men meet each other with long faces, and ask nervously if there is any news. There are few families which have not directly a painful personal interest in these dread events, and all have a national interest. The general concern, which is everywhere so manifest—and there is nothing fictitious about it—is, I think, very creditable to society. It has been a most mournful Christmas season, I doubt not, from one end of India to another; and the New Year has now opened upon us without one cheering glimpse of light. It is altogether very distressing—one circumstance, which has come to my knowledge to-day, has shocked me beyond all else."

"And what is that?" asked Dr. Winter.

"Poor old Wilton . . . you know that for a long time, he has been in a very weakly, nervous state . . . evidently breaking up. I have seen great changes in him lately—great changes ever since the first intelligence of the insurrection in Affghanistan reached us . . . I have thought that his mind has been a little unsettled; there have been undoubted symptoms of imbecility at times, though at others his recollection was strong, his perceptions as acute, his reasoning

powers as clear as ever. During the last few days he has rapidly declined.—I believe that he has not been at office since Christmas. I have always looked in to inquire after him—perhaps to sit for half-an-hour by his bed-side every day; and this afternoon, having a little time to spare, I called as usual to make my accustomed visit. When I stopped at the gate, the old *durwan* ... he has been many years in Wilton's service ... came out, crying like a child, to speak to me ... He could hardly speak; but I knew too well that the words he uttered so indistinctly, were the dreadful words, "*sahib mur-giya*" ("my master is dead.") He had not been dead half-an-hour. He appears to have sunk gradually, and to have died without a groan. When I was there, Dr. Field, who had been sent for, had not yet arrived. I went up to see the body. There were none but servants in the house—but there was no lack of genuine grief. He had been always very kind to his people—the good old man!—I suppose you knew he was dead."

"Yes," said Dr. Winter, "I heard it just as I was leaving Calcutta. His fears destroyed him. His whole soul was wrapped up in his son—his only son—who is now at Caubul. He despaired from the very first. I often attempted to prove the groundlessness of his apprehension, but all in vain ... did you know him, Miss Balfour?"

The tears were glistening in Mary's sweet eyes. ... "Yes," she said; and her voice was tremulous with emotion. "I knew him slightly; I knew his son very well."

"It is a sad history," observed Dr. Winter, "but not the only domestic tragedy I fear, which will be recorded in the prolific annals of this Affghan War. God grant that my house may not become the scene of another."

"God grant it!" repeated Mary.

"It is but too probable . . ." said Dr. Winter. "I was very selfish just now . . . poor Mrs. Witherington! I ought to have regarded it as a great privilege, that I am permitted, at such a time, when so many hearts are breaking, to do something—however little, to pour balm into one. You must have thought me, Miss Balfour, a very selfish old man—I must have suffered in your good opinion—I hope you will believe that my better self was only temporarily eclipsed."

"Indeed, I will," said Mary, "if you wish me . . . but I see no cause for self-reproach."

"I have this at all events to say in palliation, that I was sorely tempted, at that moment, to forget the claims of others."

CHAPTER XV.

LOVE'S VARYING ASPECTS.

"O'er plastic nature any change may come,
Save that which seeks to crush the primal germ;
And outward circumstance may breed within,
A second nature, which o'ercomes the first,
But ne'er destroys, though dormant or subdued."
R. H. Horne.

Dr. Winter took his departure—but not before Mary had promised to write to him; to report the progress making towards the completion of her school, to unfold her plans of operation, and, if necessary, to ask his advice. And she did write—nay, more, she took pleasure in writing. She endeavoured to fix her thoughts as steadily as possible upon the philanthropic work on which she was engaged. It was almost the only subject on which she could think long without pain. It was a great support—a great comfort. Happy are those who, in the midst of domestic tribulation, are thus supported—thus comforted from within.

And Dr. Winter wrote. His letters were very long, and very interesting. He shone even to greater advantage in his epistolary, than in his oral communications, for he expressed himself with great facility; was easy, graceful in his style; every thing he wrote seemed to come freshly from his heart, unforced, unstudied. Without losing sight of what, according to cove-

nant, was to be the main subject of their correspondence, he discoursed on a variety of topics, of personal and general interest, and appeared, in all his discourses, what in reality he was, a man of feeling—a man of refinement. On more than one occasion he alluded to his guest. Mrs. Witherington had arrived, and taken up her abode beneath his roof. The river-voyage had been greatly beneficial to her health; but there was a fever within her, beyond the power even of climate to allay—the settled fever of the mind—that dreadful state of mental unrest which no remedies could reach, and which only religion could teach her to bear, as she did bear them, with noble fortitude. She was sinking under her trials; but all she said was: "Thy will be done!" Dr. Winter spoke of her as a most interesting creature—one whose sufferings it was sad, but whose patience it was beautiful, to witness. It was, indeed, he said, a privilege to be allowed to minister to one so afflicted, yet so serene in her affliction.

One day Mary was surprised, on opening a letter from Dr. Winter, to find, instead of the accustomed three or four pages of closely written matter, only a few hasty lines. The worthy doctor said that he had intended to write to her as usual, but that he had changed his mind, and resolved to pay her a visit that evening instead. He would be at Titaghur a little before five.

At the appointed hour he arrived. Balfour had been detained in town, and Mrs. Balfour and Adela were going out for their accustomed drive in the park. The ladies were all in the drawing-room when Dr.

Winter was announced, and for some time they all joined in the general conversation, but upon Adela, after looking three or four times towards the window, observing that she thought the sun must have set, Mrs. Balfour proposed that they should start, adding with a smile, as she addressed Mary,

"And we will leave the Education Committee to hold a council in the drawing-room; or, if they like it better, to adjourn to the College of Titaghur. I will not ask you to accompany us in our pursuit of less elevated pleasures."

Dr. Winter gave Mrs. Balfour his arm; and when he returned, after handing her and Adela into the carriage, Mary was sitting in the verandah, and there the good doctor joined her. "I have been fortunate," he said, but not in his usual easy, unembarrassed manner—"I am fortunate in having so good an opportunity of speaking to you alone . . . I wished to speak to you alone . . . I have been uneasy, all the way from Calcutta, thinking I might not have an opportunity to speak to you alone."

"Alone!" exclaimed Mary. There was something in his voice, in his manner, which startled, which alarmed her.

"Yes, I wished to speak to you alone . . . matters nearly concerning you . . . concerning us . . . directly, indirectly . . . if Miss Balfour will grant me a patient" . . . then recovering himself, and speaking more calmly—more in his common manner. "The truth is, that I have much to say, which I thought it would not be wise to trust to a letter. Better to speak to you, not only

in matters regarding ourselves, but those which relate to others . . . or rather, which only indirectly affect ourselves—I have spoken so gravely, that I am afraid I have alarmed you. I am very sorry to have to say any thing which will give you pain—but I trust that you will not blame me."

"I am sure that I shall not blame you," said Mary . . . "you are always so kind . . . always so wise."

"I hope you will always think so," returned Dr. Winter . . . "but I must not keep you in painful suspense. I know that I have aroused your fears already. I will speak first, then, of others. I assure you, that if I had not entertained the highest possible opinion of you, I should not now touch upon this subject—but I have so much confidence . . . I estimate so highly your many, very many, rare virtues, that I cannot doubt for a moment, that in speaking to you I am adopting the wisest course. If any body can avert the evil which I foresee, you are competent to do it. I allude to your sister."

"My sister!"

"Yes . . . I thought it right . . . I thought it best to speak to you. If you have any . . . how can I doubt it? —you must have so much influence over her conduct . . . if, by your counsel, by your exhortations, your persuasions—if, by pointing out the dangers which beset her . . . if, by your affectionate, sisterly entreaties, which no heart, however callous, can, I am sure, resist—if you could induce her to be more guarded in her conduct . . . to think more . . . to be outwardly more steady . . . if you could show, as only a woman, a sister can do, without wounding, without giving pain, that in her

innocence, her unsuspiciousness, her ignorance of the malice of the world, she is thoughtlessly rendering herself an object of much ill-natured scandal—that merely because she does not set more restraint upon herself, because she is impatient of control, and follows unreflectingly the impulse of the moment, people are saying that of her which she would not wish to hear, which is painful to all her friends—to all her brother's friends—to all your friends, dear Miss Balfour."

"I feared it would be so . . . I feared it would be so," said Mary.

"Yes; the truth is," continued Dr. Winter, "that some malicious person has propagated a report that your sister is about to be married to Mr. Lorimer. I doubt not, his own foolish vanity has been at the bottom of it... It would at any time be painful to know that your sister's name is wrongfully associated, in the common talk of idle gossips, with that of Mr. Lorimer, or any other person, no matter whom—but under existing circumstances, doubly painful. She is talked of, I assure you—commonly talked of... and not in connexion with Mr. Lorimer alone—her intimacy with Captain Danvers is also spoken of, in a manner most painful to contemplate."

"I feared it would be so—I feared it would be so," repeated Mary.

"I thought," resumed Dr. Winter, "that it was better to speak to you on this painful subject... better to speak to you than to address myself to your brother. Men are hasty—intemperate. They may say or do things under a momentary impulse, of which they will after-

wards repent. I thought that your brother might be very angry, not only with your sister, but with those—he would have discovered them—who have dared to name her, and that evil consequences would be the result; besides, I thought that your influence would be more successfully exerted; that your mild, sisterly admonitions, couched in kindest language, offered in your own gentle manner, with such irresistible sweetness, I thought they would be more effectual than your brother's sterner reproofs. I hope you do not think I have erred."

He was leaning against a pillar as he spoke, his back towards the strong light which streamed into the verandah, so that the expression of his face was not visible; but his voice betrayed deep emotion. Mary raised her eyes as he uttered the last words, and Dr. Winter could see that they glistened with tears.

"You have not erred," she said, "save in your estimate of my influence with my sister. All that I can do shall be done; but I cannot tell you with truth, that that *all* is very much. You have acted very kindly, and I cannot sufficiently thank you for the interest you take . . . in us all." She rose as she spoke, and extended her hand to Dr. Winter . . . "I think it possible that the bare knowledge of the painful circumstances, to which you allude, will have a salutary effect upon my poor sister—that when she knows what, in such a place as this, are the consequences of even trifling indiscretions, she will herself perceive the expediency of being more guarded."

The little hand which had been extended to Dr.

Winter, and which he pressed most affectionately between his own, he did not seem much inclined to emancipate ... "Thank you—thank you," he said, "I am sure you will do all that can be done ... and how much is this!—Dearest Miss Balfour," he added, after a pause, "such influence as yours—such influence as you must exercise over all who have the delight of being intimately acquainted with you, must ever, I am sure, be irresistible. And what happiness, to submit oneself, day by day, to such sweet influence ... to be ever within the sphere of such influence ... I If could hope," here he hesitated, ... "if I could venture to think for one moment, that the possession of certain qualities, for which you have given me credit—credit more than is my due ... that a heart not grown old ... that the strongest, the most unalterable desire to render, by the most assiduous care, the most unfailing attention to every trifling wish, so sweet an idol truly happy ... If I could hope that such love, such devotion, joined to qualities of mind and heart, which you have often said you know how to estimate, could compensate for the absence of other things ... could make you forget that other possessions, often deemed essential by the young ... which, indeed, it is but natural—it is but reasonable that the young should demand ... if I could think, my dearest, kindest friend, that at my age, so destitute of all that is most attractive to the young, I could be regarded by you with such consideration as might enable me to hope, that a life devoted to you—that affection, made by the holiest ties, a duty as well as

a pleasure—would render you happy, sweetest, best of friends—oh! how eager should I be to take the precious charge to my heart."

Mary looked into his face, when he ceased to speak, with a countenance expressive of the most painful perplexity; but all she said was, "Dr. Winter!"

And the old man continued... "Yes; I have said it. It is a very presumptuous—perhaps, a very foolish thought; but it has often struck me, that you, with your gentle wisdom—your sweet benevolence—your saint-like piety... that you, though young and beautiful, and therefore fit mate for the young and beautiful, might, in the plenitude of your regard for certain qualities of mind and heart, exalting them above mere outward show, look with affection even upon me, old and ill-favoured as I am. I thought that you might be happy—God knows how I would strive to make you so, if the great privilege were mine."

But still all that Mary could say, in touching accents, was, "Dr. Winter!"

"I have thought long about it," he resumed, after a brief pause ... "of your thoughtful nature, your kindly wisdom... your many endowments of mind and heart; and I have asked myself, trying to answer the question, most fairly, most impartially, is it possible that she can love me—me so old, and so ill-favoured? and I have pondered over much, that, at different times, you have said to me—much which, as I thought, shed light upon your opinions, your feelings, dearest friend; and I have thought at last—God

forgive the delusion if it be one, Mary Balfour... but I have thought that you might love... might love me so well as to entrust yourself for ever to my safe keeping."

Again he paused. The tears stood blindingly in poor Mary's eyes; the deep emotion almost choaked her utterance, but still she said, in accents of deep sorrow:

"Oh! that this had never happened!"

A few moments of painful silence; and then, collecting herself for a great effort, Mary spoke; her hand was still in Dr. Winter's; her eyes still swimming with tears; her heart full to bursting—but she spoke with calmness, though her words came forth slowly, and with a touching pathos in their tone.

"Dear Dr. Winter; you will believe me when I say how deeply I lament that this has happened. So unlooked for, so beyond all my calculations. Miserable, most miserable the necessity which impels me to inflict a moment's pain on so kindly a heart as yours . . . miserable that I should be compelled to wound your generous nature—to cast a shadow over a path which it would have been a delight to me to brighten. You will believe me when I say that I respect, I honour, I admire you . . . nay, why should I not say I love you? I love your excellent qualities, your high principles, your kindly heart, your abundant charity. What faith have I in you, dear Dr. Winter, that I should say this to you even now. You will not misinterpret my words. Let us meet as we have

met. Forget what has passed this evening. I will endeavour to forget it . . . but of this be sure, that I shall regard you henceforth with the same affectionate feelings of reverence and gratitude, that I have ever entertained towards you—that I shall ever regard you as a dear and much-valued friend."

He raised the hand he held to his lips; then dropping it, he turned away, strode once or twice up and down the verandah; and then, returning to the spot from which Mary had not moved, he said, in a more serene, almost in a cheerful voice:

"You are right, you are quite right, my dear Miss Balfour. The scales have fallen already from my eyes—the delusion has passed away. It was monstrous. It was preposterous. You must despise me very much. An old fool to talk in such a strain—to entertain such hopes for a moment! You are very right, my dearest friend. I cannot say, now that the madness is over, how very absurd I have been!"

"Dr. Winter! . . . do not talk in such a strain as this. I cannot bear to hear you reproach yourself."

"Will you reproach me, then? I am sure I deserve censure. How many would not only have censured, but ridiculed the old man . . . his blindness, his vanity, his folly. The lesson will not be thrown away upon me. It is good for us sometimes to be reminded that we are three score."

"Had you numbered but half those years," said Mary, thinking in some measure to allay the pain she had inflicted; "had you been very young, and what you

are—possessing so much that is admirable, so much, indeed, that is loveable, I should have still returned the same answer."

There was an expression of doubt in Dr. Winter's face, as he said: "Am I to believe, then . . . I have no right to ask . . . am I to believe, then . . . am I so to interpret your words . . . that your affections are engaged?"

Mary did not immediately answer, and Dr. Winter resumed: "I have no right to put such a question . . . none . . . but believe me, that it is not the mere impertinence of curiosity. You say I am still to be your friend—an old man may make a passable friend—a passable confidant . . . though fit for very little else, he may help to make the young happy."

And Mary, without raising her eyes, without venturing to look into the face of her companion, replied: "I think, dear Dr. Winter, that you have a right to know . . . it is a right, which, after having pained you so much, I most willingly concede. And in proof of the estimation in which I hold you—of my thorough confidence in you, I tell you what I have not yet breathed to any human being . . . Yes—yes, my friend, my heart is not mine to give."

And in a few minutes they were walking up and down the verandah, Mary leaning on the old man's arm. The confidence she reposed in him was no half-confidence. She rendered him the depository of all the cherished secret of her heart. She told him that she was attached to Herbert Grey . . . she had reason to believe that the attachment was reciprocal. He had

not openly declared his love, but he had expressed himself in language not to be misunderstood; and Dr. Winter said much to confirm this belief. Much which before had made no impression on his mind—much which Grey had himself said, much which Winter had seen, though before almost unregarded—now recurred forcibly to his memory, and made up the sum of his conviction, that Herbert Grey was deeply attached to Mary Balfour; and from that hour he resolved, heart and soul, to promote by all possible means the union of his two friends. He believed that Grey was worthy of the blessing which was in store for him—he believed him to be a man of sound principle, of enlarged intelligence, of genuine kindliness of heart; and believing this, how could he doubt, for a moment, that such a pair would be blest indeed, when bound to each other by the holy ties of wedlock—journeying on together, side by side, to the end? He did not doubt. His convictions were as steady, as his resolution was firm. He had determined to promote their happiness; and the determination filled his soul with new happiness—he had still something to hope, something to live for, something to work for. He would do it . . . yes, if it were possible, they should be united—happiness should descend upon them, and through his agency. He would make *them* happy; and thus make himself happy. He felt that at present there was an obstacle to be overcome; he thought he knew its true character. He now beheld clearly enough the reason of Herbert Grey's sudden departure from Calcutta. He knew that it

must have been to avoid Mary Balfour—but why?—He thought that he could read the secret aright.

He returned to Calcutta that evening; and before he retired to rest, he had written a long letter to Herbert Grey. His sleep was sounder—his dreams pleasanter than they had been for many a night. Happy Dr. Winter! Happy old man!

CHAPTER XVI.

CAST DOWN.

"Ye see me what I have made myself
From God's best making! alas! peace forgone—
Love wrong'd—and virtue forfeit—and tears wept
Upon all vainly—alas, me! alas,
Who have undone myself from all that's best,
Fairest, and sweetest to this wretchedest,
Saddest and most defiled—cast out, cast down."

Miss Barrett.

THE month of January passed away. It was a month laden with the most corroding anxieties to all, who felt a deep personal interest in the events, which were hurrying on to so fearful a crisis the destinies of the British in the capital of Affghanistan. The news, which at uncertain intervals reached Calcutta, often in a vague fragmentary shape, was of the most unsatisfactory character, though for a while it involved a record of no new disaster. It appeared that our troops were inactive; that the enemy were quietly crouching beside them, secure in the victory they had achieved, and ready to spring upon their crippled prey, the moment that the least symptom of renewed vitality began to manifest itself—like a cat, crouching beside a maimed mouse, and ready to stretch forth an annihilating paw as soon as its victim should begin to bestir itself. It was plain, that the time for action had passed; that there was nothing left to our doomed army, but to suffer. The only remaining hope seemed to reside

in the wisdom and the fortitude of the British envoy. Surrounded by men of less experience, but of equal courage—men, whose energies like his own, rose with the occasion—he was bearing up manfully against the tide of difficulties, which was pouring in upon him; nobly upholding the character of the nation, which he represented; and exerting himself to secure the safety of the army at the least possible sacrifice of reputation. But this last hope was soon destroyed. The English in India were presently stunned by the announcement that the British envoy had been slain by the leader of the Affghans—and that this last indignity had been heaped upon us, without an effort to avenge so unparalleled an outrage. Then one and all ceased to hope. Negotiations were renewed—but after such a crowning act of insult as the murder of a British envoy, what could be looked for as the result of negotiations with the insolent foe?—It was a season of the most intense anxiety—of ever palpitating fears.

The Balfours continued to reside in Titaghur, occasionally making brief visits—seldom of more than a day's duration—to Calcutta. As time advanced, Adela's ignorance of the state of affairs beyond the Indus had, in some small measure, diminished; for, in spite of the precautions of her brother and sister, occasional drops of truth would leak out; and if it had not been for the circumstance that she was little anxious to learn the entire truth—that she turned away from the contemplation of the war in Affghanistan and all connected with it, as she would endeavour to escape a dark shadow haunting her path—the whole truth must in

time have revealed itself. She had passed the Rubicon. She had reached that dangerous stage on the road of error, at which a woman, be she wedded or betrothed wife, admits a comparison between her husband and a stranger, and strikes the balance in favour of the latter. After this, there is seldom any going back. The onward course to ruin is sure and rapid. Adela Balfour had given her heart to Captain Danvers. It was not much to give—a sorry compound of vile passion and viler vanity. It would never have been so, had Arthur Carrington been on the spot. Had he been at the water's side to receive her on her arrival, she might have lived and died a true and affectionate wife—but the absent lover—the present temptation—where was the constancy of love, the constancy of principle to preserve, when all these things were against her?

We need not trace the sad history, chapter by chapter. Mary had done her best to rouse the fears of her sister—to make manifest the perils by which she was surrounded—but vain, very vain the effort. She had only roused her to resistance. Mary knew that it would be fruitless to advise her sister. Indeed, she dreaded lest the attempt should only make matters worse. But she thought that a simple statement of facts might make a favourable impression upon Adela's mind. In this, however, she was mistaken. Adela was roused only to anger. What right, she asked, had people to interfere? Could she not ride with Mr. Lorimer, or converse with Captain Danvers, without people talking about it—without their saying ill-natured things? If people would talk, then let them. For her part she could not hope to

escape in so scandal-loving a society. What use was it to submit to such a state of social bondage? Let her do what she might, let her shut herself up all day, still people would talk. It was idle to endeavour to prevent it. She must let matters take their course.

And matters did take their course, and a very bad course it was—so bad, that Edmund Balfour, who, in all probability would have spoken out long before, had he seen all that had taken place, at last determined, cost him what it might, to awaken Adela to a sense of her real position. The evil day, he felt, was fast approaching, and nothing he could do could prevent its destined advent. Any hour might bring the dreadful intelligence of the sacrifice of our British army in Eastern Affghanistan; and then Adela must be awakened to the truth; why, then, not suffer it to dawn upon her, now that the revelation might perhaps avert another evil, not less fatal to her? As long as there was a hope of the ultimate safety of the British troops, there was an object to be gained by concealment. That hope no longer existed. The time for concealment, therefore, had passed. It had been a very painful task, a task rendered doubly painful to Balfour by his own misgivings. He had made a mistake—a mistake, the true character of which, he had at length discovered. We always make a mistake when we deviate from the strict path of truth—when we cease to be open, honest, sincere. Balfour had, with the kindest possible motives, entered upon this system of concealment; he had carried it on with the same good intentions, though there were times when his heart misgave him; but now he could

no longer doubt that, in effect, he had acted unkindly towards his sister—that the evil, into which he had betrayed her, was greater than that which he had striven to avoid. He now, therefore, determined gradually, but effectually, to make her acquainted with the position in which she had been placed by recent events; and thus, as he hoped, to render her sensible of the impropriety of her present levity of conduct. But whilst he was waiting for a favourable opportunity for the avowal of the truth, it burst upon her, without his assistance, with a sudden and most stunning effect.

One day—January was at an end—the whole party had gone into Calcutta for the day. They had a few visits to pay, some shopping to do; and Dr. Winter had entreated Mrs. Balfour to spend the day at his house, and to dine with him in the evening. She consented; and accordingly it was arranged that they should start early in the morning—Edmund accompanying them—and breakfast at the worthy doctor's. Mrs. Witherington was still an inmate of the house; but she did not make her appearance; and it seemed both to Ellen and Mary Balfour that there was something peculiar in the manner of Dr. Winter—an embarrassed air, a distressed countenance—as he came out to welcome them on their arrival. The impression that something of importance had happened, was soon strengthened by the circumstance that, after exchanging salutations with the ladies, and making a few common-place observations in a vague, wandering manner, he passed his arm through Edmund Balfour's,

and led him into his private study. The gentlemen were closeted together for some time, and when they came out to breakfast, they talked fluently on indifferent subjects; but it was plain to at least one of the ladies, that there was something very uneasy in their manner; that their assumption of indifference—even at times of cheerfulness—was but a piece of acting. Had they been more at ease, there would have been much less effort. They would have talked less, and they would have laughed less. Edmund Balfour was not a man of many words, and he very rarely laughed. It was obvious, therefore, to the ready penetration—the quick sagacity of Mary Balfour, that her brother was acting a part.

Shortly after breakfast, Mrs. Balfour and Mary set out on the expedition, the objects of which had brought them to Calcutta. Adela declined accompanying them. She had good reasons of her own for remaining at home.

Soon after eleven o'clock, Captain Danvers was announced. Adela was sitting alone in the drawing-room. Her brother had gone to office. Dr. Winter was in his study.

Danvers advanced. Adela rose from the couch on which she was sitting, and went forward to meet him, her eyes sparkling with pleasure. She was so glad that he had come; it was an age since she had seen him; she had begun to think that he never would come again. It had been very dull indeed at Titaghur. They had much wanted Captain Danvers to enliven them. It was very bad of him to stay away so long.

The captain pleaded the imperative calls of duty. He had been very unwillingly detained in Calcutta. The governor-general had not thought fit to visit Barrackpore lately, and Danvers added, that as one of his brother A.D.C.'s had been on the sick-list, he had been compelled to be more frequently in attendance at Government House. "But," he continued, "you see now what are my inclinations. I assure you that though detained in Calcutta, my heart was at Titaghur, and your note (oh! how glad I was to receive it), has, you see, brought me to your side . . . to where I would ever, ever be."

Adela had reseated herself on the couch; Danvers, as he spoke these words, was standing before her, his eyes bent on her beautiful face. She now pointed to the seat beside her, and he was not long in taking possession of it. They were, in sooth, a comely pair.

"I thought, perhaps, you would not come," said Adela.

"How could you think so?" exclaimed Danvers; "oh! how could you think so?" with much fervour; "how could you think I would not come, when I knew that you were here?"

"You men are so fickle—so wayward. I thought, perhaps, you would not come, if it were only because I wanted to see you."

"How could you be so unjust? . . . how could you judge me so unkindly?" asked the captain, seemingly with much feeling. "If you knew me better . . . if you only could read my heart"

"I'm sure I wish I could," said Adela.

"I wish you could, indeed," returned Danvers, "you would think better of me. You would not find me the cold, trifling, silly creature, which I fear you now think me . . . You called me a butterfly the other day—have butterflies hearts?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Adela, smiling.

"They have not hearts like mine—that's certain," continued the A. D. C., "ah! I wish you could see into mine—you would think better of me. You would read much that I dare not utter . . . you think I am unfeeling, because I dare not express my feelings—because I am miserably—most miserably tongue-tied." His voice faltered . . . his head drooped. If he were acting a part, he was acting it very well.

"And why tongue-tied?" asked Adela.

"You need not ask—you know but too well," said Danvers . . . "there is much—how much, which I might have said . . . much which I should long ago have said . . . much which I have often panted to say . . . but how can I?—how can I?—my heart may be full to bursting, and yet I must be silent. I have no right to speak to you on any other than common topics . . . but do not, therefore, think that I am cold . . . do not, therefore, think that I am trifling. Judge me not by what I say, but by what I feel . . . and believe that I feel much—oh! how much more than I dare utter."

"I will believe it," said Adela.

"Spoken like yourself—kind, generous!"—he raised his eyes and looked into her face, his countenance beaming with admiration . . . "I shall be happier—

now, oh! much happier . . . not happy . . . not happy," he added, more slowly, more sorrowfully—" that I can never be—but happier, now, that you no longer think me cold and heartless."

" Why not happy?—why not happy?" asked Adela with much eagerness—" you can, you will be very happy."

" Never—never."

" And why not?"

" Do not ask me—do not ask me," returned the A. D. C., in saddest accents, most despairingly, " I cannot put the answer into words—but you may read it in my face, you may hear it in my faltering voice. It has been my own fault . . . I ought to have known better."

" Better than what?"

" Better than to have sought your friendship—better than to have believed that I could see you often, could often converse with you, could enjoy your society—your friendship . . . and not . . . not . . . pay the penalty of my rashness. I had almost said what it would be wrong to say . . . what it would be wrong for you to hear without chiding me."

Captain Danvers knew women well, if he were now only acting a part. This show of principle—of forbearance—of self-sacrifice—what better calculated to touch the heart of a woman—what more likely to ripen the blossom into the full perfect fruit of love? But he was not now merely acting a part. His manner may have expressed more emotion than he really felt;

but he *was* moved—he really felt a part at least of what he said. Habituated to exaggeration, he even now exaggerated; but there was far more sincerity in his words, far more sincerity in his manner than he had ever before manifested, when protesting his devotion to others. When he said that he had not escaped unscathed—that he had acted rashly, without due regard to consequences—he spoke no more than the truth. He had *not* escaped unscathed. He had begun seriously to regret that Adela Balfour was engaged to be married to Arthur Carrington—and that there was no hope for *him*.

And now there were peculiar circumstances, which on that morning rendered him more than usually susceptible of deep emotion. He was excited—greatly excited, when he first entered Dr. Winter's house. In Adela's presence the excitement had increased. New hopes, new desires had risen up within him—and yet so mingled with pain—enveloped with such an atmosphere of terror—that he had scarcely dared to encourage them. His temples throbbed; his pulses galloped; he was in a state of wild and giddy tumult—almost like one intoxicated. The effort which he had made at the outset, to control himself—to speak calmly, guardedly—to play his part with due discretion—had utterly failed—Nature would assert itself; he could not keep it down.

"I will not speak out," he continued, "let the effort cost me what it may, I will be silent. I have played the fool's part; I will not also play the villain's. I

may suffer—but not in that wise—not the stings of an upbraiding conscience . . . I have much to bear—but my sufferings shall not be the growth of my crimes."

"Why should they be?" asked Adela; "crime! what have we to do with crime?—Dear Captain Danvers, do not speak so mournfully—you make me very sad . . . I'm sure I don't know why we should both of us be so unhappy."

"Alas! I know it too well; I wish that I did not know it," returned Danvers. . . . "I speak at least of myself . . . but you . . . perhaps, you are happy . . . I hope you are . . . ever will be—but I . . ."

"How can I be happy?" said Adela, her eyes swimming in tears . . . "how can I? you know I am not . . . I think we have been very foolish—but how could we foresee the misery which was in store for us?"

"How could we?"—and as he spoke he seized one of Adela's little hands and pressed it passionately to his lips. But at that moment a servant entered the room. He had come with a very pressing message from Dr. Winter. The doctor wished to see Captain Danvers immediately in his study, on business of great importance. The interruption was an opportune one. It recalled them both, with a rude shock, to a sense of their true position, girt about, as it was, with peril on every side.

Danvers went, and Adela was left alone with her own sad thoughts. There she sat on the sofa, her arms hanging down beside her, the tears coursing down her cheeks. She scarcely knew whether she wished him to

return or not. Absent or present, she must still suffer. There was no hope for her—one rash step had ruined all her chances of happiness in the world. No; he had better not come back. He had better not return to renew such painful scenes as that which had just been broken in upon. She would endeavour—*endeavour!*—to forget him. Yes—she dashed away the streaming tears, rose from her seat, walked once or twice across the room, and then returned to the sofa. She would do something—sing, play, read, any thing—any thing was better at such a moment than utter idleness. That way madness was lying.

The A. D. C.'s cap was lying on the couch beside her. She saw that there was a folded newspaper in it. She stretched out her hand, extracted the paper, and spread it out on her knees. Her only object was to do something—to find relief in action, however trifling—any thing that, in some small measure, might serve to mitigate the intensity of her feelings.

And she read one paragraph, then another—words—words, conveying little meaning to her brain, and from them her eyes wandered to another part of the paper, and there she read . . . no, it could not be—was she in some wild, waking dream—had the frail chain of reason suddenly snapt, and left her a prey to strange delusions? She passed her hand across her eyes, and again she read—Terror of terrors! it was too true!

That brief newspaper paragraph—terrible in its conciseness—a world of anguish in a few words. It was read in a minute—read a second time before she com-

prehended all its fearful import. History had never contained any thing more full of horrors than that little paragraph.

And to her—

In that newspaper Adela Balfour read that the Caubul army had been annihilated—cut off almost to a man; but one solitary straggler had arrived to tell the tale of unparalleled woe to the garrison of Jullalabad. It was believed that all had perished—all save that one man; that the knives of the Affghans and the cruel snow had destroyed our people by thousands.

And Arthur Carrington—her betrothed—he was dead. He must have perished in those dreadful passes; for of all the thousands that had quitted Caubul, but one man had escaped. This, then, was the consummation of all. He was dead . . . his end had been a fearful one; and she—whilst he was suffering in that land of horror, dyeing with his life-blood the snows of Affghanistan—what had she been doing all the time?

The hour of reckoning had come. And with what terrible minuteness now did her conscience take account of all the manifold offences she had committed against him, to whom she could now make no compensation. What a host of painful recollections now rose up to upbraid her. The history of years was crowded into the brief retrospect—and what a history it was! She saw it now in all its bare deformity: there was no blinding veil of passion, no mist of pleasant self-delusion—no opiate of present excitement to render her insensible to all beyond the environments of

the hour. The *truth* stood out plainly before her. She saw herself as in a glass.

She thought of her girlish days when Arthur Carrington, young, handsome, joyous—so honest, so true, so free-spirited—had first presented himself to her young imagination as the very ideal of youthful manhood; of their many happy meetings, of the first delicious growth of love—she thought at least it was love, it might have been only vanity; of the day, when he had first poured out his heart; of the brief concealment; then of the full avowal; and of the pride she felt, the pride which they both felt, when they appeared side by side amidst their many kind congratulating friends, as a young betrothed couple; then she thought of Carrington's departure from England, of all she suffered then, how time had mitigated her grief, and how, after a while, she had sailed for India there to be united for ever to her betrothed. She thought of her passage out to Calcutta—of her silly resistance of kindly control—of the thoughtless levity of her conduct—of her disregard of her position—of the mighty evil then first begun by vanity, the arch-tempter. Much of all this she had forgotten; but now she saw, in that retrospect, the wily serpent creeping on and on—and how she traced the subtle workings of the fiend in all her after-conduct. The love of admiration had ruined her. She saw it now plainly enough. She thought of the day when she landed in Calcutta—of the first shock of disappointment on learning the absence of Arthur Carrington—*of the too fleeting nature of the pain she had*

endured—the too rapid supervention of pleasurable emotion—how very soon she had ceased to grieve—how soon all her fears, all her anxieties had been lulled to rest. How bitterly did she despise herself, as she looked back upon her pitiful career of vanity. Nothing now was hidden from her. Every incident of the last few months now passed before the eye of her most faithful memory. She saw herself seeking pleasure in frivolous excitement—following the giddy impulses of the moment—lending a too willing ear to the idle flattery of others, and thinking little of her own betrothed. She saw herself growing, day after day, more a slave to her own vile vanity—sinking lower and lower in her downward career of infidelity—doing foul wrong to the noble heart which had so trusted her, to the noble heart of which she was so unworthy. She saw herself, regardless of every warning, seeking rather than avoiding temptation, proud of her own independence, resisting and resenting the kindly interference of the friends who loved her, and rushing on to destruction with a stubbornness, which she now looked back upon with dismay. And for what had she done all this—for what had she shamed her womanhood? For the passing pleasure, the fleeting excitement of hollow flattery—of a vanity satisfied with sweet words and admiring looks, words and looks from which she ought to have turned reproachfully away? And for *whom* had she done this great wrong to her betrothed—this great wrong to herself? For *one, not worthy to buckle on the sword of such a man* as Arthur Carrington—for one, with not a tithe of his

truthful manfulness of character—his frank, open, soldierly bearing—his cheerfulness, his sincerity, his sunny-heartedness. How could she have so wronged him—one so worthy of her love? She had forgotten his good qualities—had closed her eyes to his worth; but now—now that it was too late, she saw the true value of what she had lost. Under what a strong delusion had she laboured—and now how plainly she saw the truth. And what a dreadful truth! He whom, in her madness, she had deserted—he whom she had so wronged, and to whom she was now fain to make a life-long compensation; he was lost to her for ever. Whilst she had been idly flirting with another, he had been enduring unparalleled hardships in a far-off land—whilst she had been suffering flirtation to assume another, a more criminal form, he had been nobly struggling to redeem the honour of his country—and, in the midst of most unexampled horrors, pouring out his life-blood in her cause. That fearful massacre in the wild passes of Affghanistan! Shuddering, she pressed her hands against her throbbing eyelids, as though to shut out the hideous picture.

Merciful, indeed, would have been the dispensation, if at that moment of consummate suffering, her senses had utterly deserted her. But she did not swoon. Her faculties were preserved to her in all their strength, all their clearness, that she might see, in its barest truth, the nature of the evil she had done; the genuine character of her unworthiness. And she saw every thing with microscopic minuteness—saw every thing with a comprehensive vision, taking in, at a single glance, the

huddling events of years. The cup of self-reproach was full to the very brim. With the paper still on her knees, her arms hanging down beside her, her pale face rigid as marble, her arid throbbing eyes fixed on vacancy, she sate, like a statue of Despair. No words can describe her sufferings—no words can describe the piteous aspect of the sufferer.

It seemed to her—poor thing!—that those sufferings had endured for hours, so mighty had been the throng of feelings which had rushed upon her, so very much had she seen in that most mournful retrospect, when she was roused from the painful torpor of grief into which she had fallen, by the noise of carriage wheels beneath the window. She did not move; but, as though in expectation of something, she knew not what, she turned her face towards the door; in another minute she had risen from her seat, staggered forward with extended arms, and thrown herself upon the neck of her sister.

And then she wept—for the first time, since that awful truth had broken upon her, tears had come to her relief.

> "Thank God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
> More grief than ye can weep for."

Adela laid her head upon her sister's shoulder, sobbing and weeping like a child.

Mary asked no question. She saw the open newspaper on the floor, and she read at once the history of her sister's passion. "My poor Adela," she said, "my poor Adela, what can I say to comfort you?"

And Mrs. Balfour entered the room. They had returned after a brief absence, for at the first house

which they visited, they had been made acquainted with the terrible calamity which had descended upon the army in Affghanistan; and at once they had turned the heads of their horses homewards. There was nothing more to be done that day.

"My poor Adela!"—and the tears flowed freely. It was something to elicit so much genuine sympathy—something to draw forth, at such a time, so sweet a stream of womanly kindness. This sympathy, this kindness; they made the tears flow faster and more fast—and who can say what comfort there was in their flowing?

And presently she raised her head from her sister's shoulder, and looking first into Mary's face, then into Ellen's, with a countenance at once expressive of penitence and gratitude the most profound, said, in accents that might have touched the heart of a savage: "Take me away from this house."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAST NIGHT AT CAUBUL.

" On Linden when the sun was low,
All bloodless lay the untrodden snow,
* * * * * *
" Few, few shall part where many meet,
The snow shall be their winding sheet,
And every turf beneath their feet,
Shall be a soldier's sepulchre."

Campbell.

BACK—back, to Caubul. Back, back to the doomed army, the army of a great nation, erst in all the pride of power mighty to achieve, now helpless at the feet of the barbarian—Back, back, to the desolated camp, where pale horror sits crouching at many a door, and stoutest hearts have ceased to see in the dark heaven of the future a solitary star of hope—Back to the homes of our weary soldiers, in that fatal land, where famine and slaughter glare upon them from every side; and far and wide the dreadful snow stretches its huge winding-sheet for the thousands destined to repose upon it in the last grim sleep of death.

Back—back, to Caubul. The " game is up." It only remains for them to suffer For two long months have they been exposed to all the horrors of that wintry insurrection; a multitudinous enemy, burning with fierce Mahomedan zeal, with fierce Mahomedan revenge; distraction in their own councils, weakness in high places, discontent in low ones; cold and hunger

pressing heavily upon them, and all the wearing anxieties of a life beset with perils, which they are not suffered to face—a life of painful indolence—of torturing uncertainty—a life of which all the buoyancy, the elasticity of brave-hearted youth, all the noble fortitude of sterner manhood, cannot render less grievous the burden.

Back, back, to Caubul; where delicate women and tender children look forth from the home they are about to abandon upon the wide tract of snow beneath them; where mothers look on their infants, husbands on their wives, the unutterable fear swelling their hearts, and making the great sorrow speechless.

Back, back to Caubul, where the timid natives of the plains of Hindostan, transplanted from the torrid regions of the south, sicken beneath the wintry cold, and with vague horror shudder at the falling snow—a strange and portentous sight to be gazed at with trembling wonder. Back, back to Caubul, where all have endured so much, which all are now about to abandon. Death to remain; but at such a time, death to go forth into the dreadful snow; death to struggle, spiritless, impotent through cruel passes, infested by enemies more savage than beasts of prey.

It was the evening of the 5th of January. The order had gone forth for the evacuation of Caubul. It had long been deemed hopeless to attempt to recover, by hard fighting, as became Englishmen, what had been lost in the earlier stages of the insurrection. The sword had been long sheathed. The British force wanted a leader—wanted wisdom, wanted energy, in the highest

ranks; and thus destitute, what could they hope to accomplish? Every thing had been against them. They had lost, at the beginning, more than they could ever hope to regain. Disaster had succeeded disaster, and, as a crowning outrage, the leader of the Affghans had slain the man, to whose wisdom the doomed force had been looking for any little hope of safety which remained to them in that fearful conjuncture. Then negotiation had followed negotiation; there had been more councils, and more treaties. The evacuation of Caubul had been determined upon; orders had gone forth for the march—on one day, then on another—and at last the 6th of January had been fixed upon as the day, which should see our broken force in motion towards Hindostan.

And on the evening of the fifth, Arthur Carrington, in his dreary barrack-room, was making the last preparations for the march. Perhaps he had borne up with hope and cheerfulness against the tide of evil which had so long been flowing in upon them, longer than any man in camp; but even he had given way at last. He had been greatly irritated, greatly annoyed, by the want of energy he saw around him. Powerless himself, he had looked on with dismay, at the imbecility which had evidenced itself precisely where imbecility could not fail to be most destructive. He had fretted and fumed for a while—fretted and fumed to no purpose, and then he had begun to despond. As long as he had been permitted to act, he bore up manfully against every trial; but inactivity had been fatal to him. With an insolent foe at the gate, to be com-

pelled to keep the sword in the scabbard. The endurance of Arthur Carrington was no proof against this. His temper, his cheerfulness, had failed him; he had done his best to stem the tide; but he could not buffet it any longer.

After a long stagnation it was a relief to him to know that under any circumstances, the force was again to be put in motion. Capitulation was an ugly word, but in effect they had long ago capitulated; and whatever guarantee of protection had been offered to the army, he felt assured that the retreat to Jullalabad would in reality be a series of engagements. They would indeed be compelled to fight their way down—hazardous with a hostile population on every side—but it was something again to face active danger; to see the worst clearly before him; to meet it as became a man, with a bold front; not to crouch down shudderingly in a corner as though in hope to avoid the worst—at all events, to delay it. No; far better to quit the scene of their disgrace, to march out and die with their swords in their hands. They might at all events find soldiers' graves in the snow-clad passes. Caubul was but the grave of their honor.

Some such considerations as these had raised in the breast of Arthur Carrington feelings which had cast once again over his handsome face something of that old genial, sunny expression, which was so characteristic of the man. He was busily employed; and a couple of Hindostanee servants were assisting him. He was packing some bottles in a hamper, and talking, as he went on, a sort of jargon of his own—one-third of which was Hindostanee, and the other two-thirds

composed of Persian and English, the latter greatly preponderating. A large wood fire was burning in the room ; and the natives seemed much more inclined to crouch down beside it, than to assist their master in securing the little baggage he was about to take with him on the following day.

"Well," he said, partly talking to himself, partly to his servants; "one more bottle, and then the basket will be full. A lucky fellow I am, indeed, to have almost a dozen bottles of sherry and brandy left, at this time of day. They will be worth more than their weight in gold—bivouacking in the snow some of these fine nights. Put in a little more straw, Peer Khan—why, even your Mahomedan lips will not refuse to take a pull at this to-morrow . . . we must not have the bottles broken . . . come, come, only work like men, and you shall have plenty of fire. We have not yet consumed the whole of the old camp-table. There are two legs and a leaf remaining. Now for it—give me the carving-knife. That will do bravely," and as he spoke, he took the knife into his hand, and placing one end of the leaf of the table on the ground, he began, with the aid of one of its legs and the aforesaid carver, to cut the board into long strips of firewood.

"There—what do you think of that?" he continued, as he threw the fragments of the table on the blazing pile; "the room is as hot as an oven. We have got a chair left, I am very happy to see. Now for it, my fine fellows, pass that cord round the basket. I think my share of baggage will be reduced to one bullock-trunk and a couple of hampers. Let us see what more we

can get into the trunk. Books—not much time for reading I take it."

He spread out a number of volumes on the floor.

"Here's a 'Torrens,' we shall get on without manœuvres, I take it, during the next few days . . . *that* may be sacrificed—and an 'Army List.' *That* will be of very little use. By the time we reach Jullalabad, a new edition will be wanted—so many names out of it for ever"—and he sighed. "A Bible—I will keep that," putting it aside; "a volume of the 'United Service Journal,' . . . that may be left for the benefit of the Caubulees, if I do not burn it before I go. Three odd numbers of 'Pickwick'— it is almost ungrateful to abandon them, for they have helped me to many a hearty laugh; but I suppose they must go with the rest . . . and here . . . ah! that is another matter. 'Moore's Irish Melodies,' from my sweet Adela! A present—the first thing she ever gave me, dear girl!" kissing it, and then turning over its pages. . .

"'Oh! 'tis sweet to think that where'er we rove,
We are sure to find something blissful and dear,
And when we are far from the lips that we love,
We have but to make love to the lips we are near.'

"Wrong—very wrong . . . not my case—not my case. Nor Adela's."

Then he paused. A graver expression had overspread his face. He closed the book, laid it down beside the Bible, and heaved a deep sigh.

"My poor Adela!—what if—I will not think of it . . . no, no!"

Then, as though he sought relief in action, however

trifling, he threw aside some more books, and poured out on the floor the contents of an old bullock-trunk.

"Capital!" he said, "these are the very things . . . some warm worsted stockings and woollen shirts; take them . . . here is one for each of you"—giving them to his servants. "Never mind how many clothes you have on already—put these over all—the more the better. You will not find yourselves too hot to-morrow, I promise you. Ah! whom have we here—what, Wilton!"

Yes, it was Wilton who now entered the room. They had often met during the last month; they had met, too, as friends.

They shook hands with each other. "Here I am, you see," began Carrington, "busy, making my little preparations for our pleasant journey to-morrow. Have you done every thing, Wilton?"

"Every thing; I have long been ready—some days, thinking that each one was to be our last at Caubul."

"And I," said Carrington, "shall be surprised, even now if we do start to-morrow. Vacillation has not gone to its very furthest yet. I have packed up a hamper of wine and brandy; but here is the remainder of a bottle of the latter comfortable cordial, which we may as well share between us; we shall not be quite so comfortable to-morrow night whether we go or stay, for my furniture is very nearly burnt out. Come, sit down; I have only one chair left, and we shall do just as well on the floor."

They sat down before the fire. Carrington poured some water into a saucepan, and put it on the fire to

boil. In a few minutes they were enjoying a stiff compound of hot grog.

"We may as well not be idle," said Carrington, drawing towards him, as he sat on the floor, one of the bullock-trunks, and ordering his bearer who was huddled up near the fire, to give it a push. "This box I shall certainly take with me, for it seems a strong and serviceable one. I hold it to be every man's duty to take as little as possible, we shall have encumbrances enough without a long train of unnecessary baggage. Now for it! I shall have to abandon a vast deal of this," and he drew forth several articles of clothing. As he did so, something heavy fell on the ground—so large, too, that although a portion of it was covered by the garments beneath which it had fallen, it could not escape the attention of either of the young men. They both saw that it was a framed picture.

Arthur Carrington immediately made a movement, as though he were anxious to conceal it, but Wilton laid his hand on his companion's arm. "No, no, I know what it is. Do not conceal it, pray."

Carrington did not answer, and Mark Wilton resumed: "I know what it is; it is *her* picture. You mean kindly, but I should like to see it."

There was something so earnest in his manner, such genuine sincerity in the tones of his voice that Carrington could not refuse the request. "There," he said, "if you wish to see it, take it, my good fellow. It does not do her justice, quite."

"No," said Wilton, as with a tremulous hand he

took the picture; which was a free water-colour sketch, "no—no, it does not do her justice. . . and yet. . . and yet, I think I see her now before me. The eyes, the forehead—the mouth is not very like, the figure has not half her grace—and yet it is something—surely it is very much even to have such a portrait as this. I could look at that sweet face for hours."

"I have a better likeness round my neck," said Arthur Carrington, unbuttoning his frock-coat, and drawing forth a miniature, set in gold . . . "I wear this ever near my heart. Does it not almost speak to you?"

"It does—it does . . . I have seen her look thus"—he faltered, for he was deeply moved . . . "I have seen her at times . . . the old expression . . . Poor Adela!—poor Adela!—if she knew . . ."

"No—no—Wilton . . . let us not talk of this. At such a time we must be men indeed . . . there . . . let us put aside the portrait. The picture will travel safely—if any thing will travel safely—at the bottom of that box . . . those two books next to it—and then some clothes. There is a parcel, too, which poor Walsingham gave me ere he died—the fine fellow!—and which I promised, if spared, to deliver over to his father—and his sword, too, that shall travel girded around my waist."

"Yes . . . this is a time," said Wilton, "at which we must all pledge ourselves to help one another—the survivors to be faithful to the dead. I came this evening to your quarters, chiefly to ask you, if you had prepared the letter which you promised to entrust to my

safe keeping, in case—in case that I alone should reach the provinces in safety."

"Yes—I wrote it last night," returned Carrington.

"And you have full confidence in me?"

"Full and entire confidence."

"I call God to witness that it is not misplaced."

"This is the letter," said Carrington, placing a small, thin parcel, with a wax-cloth covering, in Wilton's hands—"brief and sad . . . perhaps, it will be a mournful pleasure to her to know that I thought of her at the last."

"And should I fall" . . . he hesitated, as though doubting whether to finish the sentence, or to leave his thoughts unexpressed.

Carrington knew what those thoughts were, and quickly finished the sentence for him. "I will tell her that you thought of her to the last" . . . then, after a brief pause, he added, "but no more of this now. It is better not to think of such things. We shall want all our sterner selves to-morrow. It will be no time for tender feeling, for tears and sighs—for any love-sick fancies."

"We shall be near each other," said Wilton.

"Yes; they would have left me to be my own commanding officer—to fall in among the camp-followers, if I had liked it," said Carrington. "I have scarcely a file of my own fellows left—the few recovered men I once had, have gone back to the hospital again, and but for my own representations, I might have been left a gentleman at large to make my way to Jullalabad after my own

fashion. I may be of use, Wilton, as it is . . . falling in with your corps. Your men want officers—you know I am ordered to the — company."

"Yes; you will be just before me—have you seen the orders for the march?"

Carrington replied in the affirmative. "We are to form part of the advance," he added—"so much the better; would that those splendid horse-artillery fellows were of our party too. Still if the dogs play us false we shall leave the friends in our rear something to stumble over, as they move up to our ground. Oh! that we had a full brigade of such gallant fellows as these."

"But their guns," said Wilton.

"They will have to spike them ere they have proceeded far . . . and splendid cavalry will they make then . . . ah! here is a friend. Come in, my good fellow . . . the bottle is not empty yet."

The new comer was Captain Witherington—he had grown much thinner during the last few weeks; his complexion had lost all its ruddy tint, and was now, where not bronzed by exposure to the weather, sallow and unhealthy in its aspect; there was a rigid compressed look about his mouth; and he was, at least, ten years older in appearance than at the first commencement of the outbreak.

"Any fresh orders out?" asked Carrington, when his friend, after repeated exhortations, had seated himself on a camel-trunk, near the fire. "Has the march been countermanded yet?"

"No," returned Witherington, "I do not think that the march will be countermanded, and that because I

believe that there are very good reasons why it should be. The first bugle is to sound at seven to-morrow. I hear that the old Shah is, or pretends to be, in a sad state of alarm ... and that they, who are really our friends, and inclined to assist us, recommend us not to go."

"It would be the same a month hence," returned Carrington; "the sooner we go the better. By delaying, we shall only give the dogs more time to concert measures for our destruction."

"There will be destruction enough without the aid of treachery," said Witherington. ... "The snow in the passes, and the hostile population, over whom Mahomed Akbar and the other chiefs can have no sort of control. You may be sure that we shall have to fight our way down, every inch of it, to Jullalabad. And what is to become of the poor women, the God above us only knows."

"They go with the advance, do they not?" asked Carrington.

"Yes—I have just seen some of them ... doing all I can to assist them, poor creatures, in their distress—the widows and the orphans, Carrington. . . . the fortitude of those poor women is something almost sublime; so patient and so grateful—they have friends everywhere, that is one consolation; there is not a heart in camp, which does not bleed for them!"

"Not one," said Carrington.

"And when I think," resumed Witherington, "of the sufferings in store for them—when I think of all they are destined to endure in those cruel passes—of the dreadful death, or the worse than death, impending

over them, my heart swells with gratitude to God—for my treasure at least is safe." He spoke with a harsh voice, and with hard, tearless eyes looked into Carrington's face, as though to scan the expression of the young man's countenance, and through it to read his heart. His grief had lost all its tenderness. The fount of tears was dried up within him; and there was a slow fire burning in its place.

And Carrington's face was full of genuine sympathy —"readable as open book." Witherington could not doubt—could not mistrust the kindly feeling which was so legibly written there. "You are a good fellow," he said. "I know no man in camp, whom I would rather trust. It has occurred to me, that as you go with the advance, and my troop is with the rear-guard, you may chance to escape perils which may be in store for me . . . the probability is, that the rear will be attacked as we move out. At all events, we shall be at some distance from each other . . . you may escape, and I fall . . . if you will take this letter for me, sew it inside your coat . . . and if you should reach the provinces . . *see* her, my poor little wife."

"Yes—yes—that I will," said Carrington, earnestly; "but your Affghan friend? . . ."

"I trust him still," interrupted Witherington . . . "I have full confidence in him, but he also might perish . . . I would try every chance . . . and, moreover, I would wish you to see her . . . and speak to her."

"Yes . . . yes," said Carrington . . . "it is a time at which we should all help each other to the utmost. Wilton is to perform the same kind office for me . . .

and you, Witherington, have already rendered me anxious to return the kindness you have done me.... If your Affghan fellow is true, we shall at all events have secured one messenger more likely to escape the perils of the retreat, than any of us Kaffirs."

"You may rely on his fidelity—now God preserve you, Carrington ... and you, Wilton ... Heaven only knows where we shall meet next." He shook the two young men fervently by the hand, and drawing his cap over his brows, hastily quitted the apartment.

Wilton soon followed, and Carrington was left to complete his preparations for the morrow's march. This was soon done, though the Hindostanees had fallen asleep, and he was unwilling to arouse them. Nor was it long before he also slept. A prayer, brief but fervent, offered up to the God, in whose hands are the destinies of nations—who alone can humiliate and exalt—and wrapping his cloak around him, and laying out a pillow for his head, he stretched himself before the fire; and had soon, in dreamy imagination, quitted the snowy wilds of Affghanistan, with all the attendant horrors of the wintry war, and revisited that happy, peaceful spot, where, in early joyous youth, he first beheld the light of love beaming in the sweet eyes of Adela Balfour.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DREADFUL SNOW.

"Their's was the dreadful snow, who, hand to hand,
Bravely but vainly massacre withstood,
In the dark passes of the Indian land,
Where thoughts of unforgotten horror brood!
Whose cry for mercy in despairing mood,
Rose in a language foreign to their foes,
Groaning and choking in a sea of blood,
No prayer, no hymn to soothe their last repose,
No calm and friendly hands their stiffening eyes to close."
Mrs. Norton's "Child of the Islands."

THE morning broke upon a scene of confusion. The whole camp was a-stir before daybreak. There was "hurrying to and fro," and noise, and uproar; and haste where no haste was needed; much questioning and little answering; much ordering and little obeying; many taking heed for themselves, few taking heed for their brethren. There were troops to be paraded; cattle to be loaded; baggage to be despatched; ammunition to be secured; and every thing amidst a Babel of voices, shouting and bellowing, and roaring, and screaming everywhere, from thousands of camp-followers—men, women, and children, who were huddling together in dense crowds, scared, trembling — many of them wild with terror — some of them wild with drink—burning liquor, which in the

confusion they had seized—plundering every thing which came within their reach—and poured with frantic energy down their gasping throats.

It was a clear, bright, crisp morning—intensely cold; serene over-head—no snow falling; but beneath them, far and wide, stretched the thick white coverlid of the northern winter; on the hills, on the plains, over the city, over the camp, over the neighbouring villages; and deep, deep beyond in the dreary passes, every-where around them and afar off stretched that one deep covering of clear bright snow.

And on went the advance-guard of that doomed army, slowly and mournfully on its dismal journey. On went they through the knee-deep snow; and as they went no Affghan voices sounded in their ears, no Affghan arms glittered before them; none came forth to insult, none came forth to oppose them. On went the advance-guard— it might have been an army that was pouring out of Caubul; it might have been a rabble, Heaven knows. It was a mournful sight, truly; but even there, even there in that force, doomed and disgraced, many brave hearts were beating, many truly English hearts —hearts whose noble spirit no present suffering, no threatening danger, no mighty horror could subdue.

And on they went through the knee-deep snow— slowly, steadily at first; a little while and there was some show of military bearing; a very little while they bore that martial front; for soon the stream of camp followers poured on, without let or hinderance, thousands of frightened Hindostanee followers came welling

on most tumultuously, a huge black stream coursing o'er the wide extent of snow, men, women, and children in terrible confusion; and where was discipline then?

And on they went through the knee-deep snow—column after column; and as the retreating force streamed out of the entrenched camp in which they had so long vainly striven to bear up against the out-numbering host, in rushed the Affghan hordes, soldiers and citizens, and fierce gazees, eager on plunder, eager on destruction, wreaking their vengeance on inanimate objects, and in the midst of the wildest confusion, raising a din as terrible as ever ascended from the revelry of fiends.

* * * * * *

And in that deep snow, after a weary day's march—a march of little progress—the doomed army halted for the night. Many had perished—the old and the infirm, they who had little life in their languid blood, had sunk down by the way and died. Delicate women and young children had found early graves in the dreadful snow; and mighty had been the suffering of the day. It was but a faint prelude—a slight foreshadowing of the mightier horror to come.

And what an encampment did the night look down upon! The few tents which were pitched on the encamping ground were thrown together in strange confusion; no order was preserved; the men of one regiment mingled with the men of another. As column after column came up, the confusion became more confused. It was no longer an army bivouacking. It was a rabble cast adrift in the snow. The white man and

the black met together in common fellowship; all eager for warmth, clamouring for some protection against the cruel cold. Fortunate they who could obtain the scanty shelter of a soldier's pall. Many sat in the open night—no covering above them save the wintry sky—brushing away the snow as best they could, and sitting, or lying, surrounded by the white walls they had raised, with benumbed hands, on the hard frozen ground beneath them. Ah! and how many, that night, stretched themselves out to sleep—how many whom the morning's sun dawned upon as stiffened corpses!

And there, in the midst of that dreadful snow, were Arthur Carrington and Mark Wilton. They had struggled on manfully, like brave souls as they were—men with strong hearts and strong sinewy frames; and their example had not been thrown away upon the men whom they commanded. In no companies had better order been preserved—but how very little was the very best; and, in spite of every effort, of almost unceasing exhortation, discipline had been well nigh abandoned before they had come up to the encamping ground. They had been almost the first to arrive; but this only gave them a longer night; and the difficulties of the halt were not less grievous than the difficulties of the march.

They set themselves steadily to work, to secure their men against the rigours of the night. They recommended them, if possible—but they scarcely hoped that the recommendation would be otherwise than vain—not to abandon themselves to sleep; but if exhausted nature would assert itself, it would be wise, they said,

for their men to sleep close together—and to cover themselves over, as one man, with all the warm clothing they could collect—thus exposing to the outer air the smallest possible surface. The two young officers had dismounted from their horses, and were moving about in every direction, bringing their men together, addressing to each some words of comfort, encouragement, or advice; and promising to do every thing that lay in their power to mitigate the sufferings of their comrades. At this time little, if any, of the camp equipage had arrived. There had been during the day an enormous sacrifice of baggage; and now that the advance had arrived, there was neither shelter nor food for the half-famished troops. The prospect was very dreary, but Arthur Carrington had much to do, and in action he was always sanguine.

"Well," he said, after he had done every thing that could be done to mitigate the sufferings of those committed to his care, "we have had a nice day's work of it, have we not? A few more such, and where will be the twelve thousand men, who left Caubul this morning? It is sorry work altogether. If one could but find one's servants, it would be something—that is to say, if they kept close to one's baggage."

"Baggage," returned Wilton, "very little of that I fancy we shall ever set our eyes upon again. The only baggage, I suspect, which remains to me, is my cheroot box . . . and, at such a time too, not the least valuable of one's worldly goods. . . . Take one," producing the box as he spoke, "it may keep the breath from freezing on your lips."

"No;" said Carrington, "I have a few of my own —why should I take yours? At such a time, it would be robbery. I think with you, that nothing can be better this cold night than a pipe;" and cheerfully did he begin, whilst Wilton was striking a light, to trill the well-known words of the old song,

> "A lass is good, and a glass is good,
> And a pipe to smoke in cold weather."

"Cold enough, bitter," said Wilton, "it is something to be alive.... We must have left many by the wayside.... I saw an old, grey-haired, emaciated sepoy quietly lay himself down to die before we reached our ground; and I saw more than one woman, from that frantic crowd of camp-followers, who would rush on to the head of the column, sink down into the snow, to be trampled on by our horses' heels . . . one poor creature I myself saved . . . but only perhaps to die a slower, a more cruel death. There was no mercy in the act."

"And yet," said Carrington, "what we have seen to-day is holiday-work to what we may expect . . . By Jupiter, those fellows at Caubul are celebrating our departure with a grand illumination. Splendid bonfires those indeed—see how the bright red light tinges the heavens far and wide, even at this distance one might almost see to read by it."

"The dogs must be burning our old cantonments, every thing that is inflammable in them, destroying all the mission-buildings, and making a fine *tomasha* of it. I hope that they will be so much exhilarated at our departure, that they will suffer us to depart in peace.

Halloa ! my good man, what are you looking after ?" These last words were addressed by Wilton to a man of his regiment, who with the stock of his musket on his shoulder, and the barrel in his hand, had come up to the spot on which the two young officers were standing, and looked inquisitively into the face of each.

"Only looking for my brother, yer honour."

"Your brother ?"

"Yes, Michael Flanagan, of the —— Company. I've missed him ever since we halted, and I'd like to lay down beside him anyhow, if one is to wake up dead."

"I've not seen him," said Wilton, "but take my advice, and don't lie down to sleep."

"It's mighty sleepy I am, yer honour, and one can but die once."

"Better live to serve out a few more of these Affghan dogs," said Arthur Carrington, "you have not done your work yet. Here, take a cheroot, it will help to keep you awake, my fine fellow."

"Thank yer honour—long life to yer honour. I'll see what can be done. It's better to live anyhow," and the man, touching the peak of his cap, strolled on in search of his brother.

He had scarcely gone, when an officer dismounted, and leading his horse, approached the spot where Carrington and his companion were standing. He was a tall boney man, and as he neared them, the red light fell upon his face, and disclosed the hard rigid features of Lieutenant Rivers.

"Ah! Carrington," he said, shortening the rein by which he led his snorting charger, and halting opposite his friend. "You here . . . sorry work—is it not? I told you there would be an universal wreck. You may have fared better in the advance with your Europeans . . . my sepoys are in a miserable plight. I really don't know what to do for them. I am wandering about now in search of my quarter-master sergeant."—Rivers was quarter-master of his corps —"I cannot tell what has become of him, whither he has wandered in this terrible confusion. With such a fearful din everywhere, it is idle to shout out his name—idle, if one had the voice of a Stentor. My syces, too, have wandered—been lost, and with them one of my horses. I am groom, every thing now, and with the snow balling so fearfully in one's horse's shoes, one needs the services of a syce every five minutes. But this is nothing, it were unmanly to think of one's-self. Those wretched sepoys, where am I to find covering for them. I have done my best, Heaven knows; but as yet I have not been able to muster half-a-dozen tents—wretched palls they are—to cover them. Many will be frozen to death. It is not my fault."

"No," said Carrington, "it is God's will."

"Yes, without bedding — without food—without fuel . . . to pass the night in the dreadful snow, no fire to warm them—no nourishment to sustain them. They will perish by scores."

"Tell them not to sleep."

"Tell them not to be cold . . . not to be hungry—not

to shiver . . . not to be weary," said Rivers. "Sleep is the only thing left to them—their only consolation. They *will* lie down and sleep."

"And die," added Carrington.

"Yes," rejoined Rivers, "or if they have vital energy enough to resist the cruel frosts for one night, to-morrow will surely do the work of death on hundreds of our men, though an enemy should not appear in sight. Would that it were all over—that the hour of annihilation had come. I have done every thing that can be done, but I fear that the time for doing is past. I cannot alleviate the sufferings of these poor people. Would to Heaven that I could."

"It remains for us to *endeavour*," said Mark Wilton.

"True," repeated Rivers, "this is all we now have to live for; but for this, we had better die at once. I have been thinking so a long time now. I hope that I am ready."

He passed on, leading his horse by the bridle, and was soon lost in the darkness and confusion around.

* * * * *

Night passed—a long, weary night to the wakers—a fatal night to many who had slept. Night passed—and morning dawned—dawned upon a scene of wretched confusion. The whole camp was astir; camp-followers in thousands rushing on a-head; men, who were not camp-followers, now ceasing to be soldiers; mixing themselves up with the baggage, which had not been abandoned on the previous day; thinking only of their own personal safety—all hurrying on scared and breath-

less, scarcely knowing whither they went. Bullocks and ponies, and mules, and camels were huddled together in a dense mass—some sinking down under their loads, others stumbling over the carcases of the fallen, and perishing in the snow. Bootless every effort to restore order. Officers exerted themselves in vain. Ready with any idle excuse, the sepoys were swarming on ahead, far, far from where ought to have been their regiments—some throwing away their arms—some searching the baggage which had fallen by the wayside, in the hope of finding provisions—some, in utter despair, laying themselves down to die.

And on moved the doomed army—moved on, not as a disciplined force, answering the bugle call—the bugle sounded in obedience to the foregone orders of a military chief—but hurriedly, irregularly, a mere rabble, seeking safety in flight. The camp-followers and baggage were a-head of them—hard the labour to struggle through — difficult the way along a road rendered everywhere almost impassable by the carcasses of the beasts of burden, which had sunk down in the snow to die.

"Back—back!" shouted Arthur Carrington, to the company of which he had been placed in charge; "back, my fine fellows; keep together for your lives. If you straggle, you are lost. If you only move steadily on, all may yet be well. Back, back, there; that is better .. that will do, my fine fellows... steady, steady... we shall see an enemy soon. Keep close, whatever you do. Never think that those dogs can destroy a compact British column .. steady, steady... they are firing. Now,

my boys, they shall see of what stuff we are made. For Heaven's sake, my brave fellows, don't be in a hurry . . . we have no cartridges to spare . . . let every one do its work. If you fire before the time, you will only injure yourselves. What is the matter now?"

They were passing a small fort, from which a party of Affghans had sallied forth and made a rush upon the guns. They were guns belonging to the mountain train, and drawn by ponies or mules. The syces, on the first appearance of the enemy, had fled in dismay. The gunners offered no strenuous resistance; and the guns fell into the hands of the Affghans. The officer in charge of them, as brave a fellow as ever lived, was endeavouring to rally his men, and bring them back to the recapture of the guns. "Now for it," cried Arthur Carrington—"steady . . . you will not let those scaramouches carry off our guns. Cease firing there on the left . . . what are you doing?—push on—forward there . . . what are you doing?—you wont let those *golundauze* show themselves better men than you are, will you?"

The artillery-men had retaken the guns—but hard work they found to keep them. "Now, my lads," cried Carrington, with a loud, clear voice, "now for it; the guns are ours . . . push on . . . don't fire till you are close, and the guns will remain ours."

Like orders were shouted out by other officers, and the men advanced—wavering, unsteady. Carrington, flourishing aloft his heavy-metaled sword, rode on ahead, and Mark Wilton was presently by his side. The ex-

ample—set also by other officers—was not without its effect, and the men pushed on.

Carrington had just reached the guns, where some sharp-fighting—hand to hand—was going on; when a shot from a jezail struck his horse between the ears, and the animal, falling in the death-agony, rolled heavily over him.

He was not long in recovering himself. Rising not much hurt, for the snow on which he had fallen, had in some measure preserved him ; he looked around for his men. The guns were still held by the artillery-men, who were sorely pressed by the Affghan swords-men; and it was plain that in a little time the gunners would be compelled to abandon them. Where then were the European infantry? Carrington saw at once that they had failed him. They were not keeping the guns, but, scattered here and there, were firing, aimless, purposeless, from a distance. He shouted to them . . . but they would not obey. The officer in charge of the guns was spiking them, and the gallant old brigadier commanding the advance, with his own hands aiding the work. Where then were the Europeans? "Up—up," shouted Carrington, again and again; "if you have any manhood in you, move up now. Forward—forward . . . keep together . . . re-form company, in Heaven's name. Shall we leave those guns to the enemy?"

Vainly shouted Arthur Carrington—vainly shouted Mark Wilton—vainly shouted other officers of the corps. The guns were spiked; the brave men who did

the work, regardless of the death which threatened them from the sabres of the Affghans, which were glancing around them—from the jezail balls, which rang on the metal of the guns.

"Curse their craven souls!" cried Mark Wilton ... "when you fell, it was all over with them.... they wavered from that moment. Are you hurt, my fine fellow?"

"Not much," said Carrington ... "but my poor grey, who has carried me so long and so gallantly—curse on those Affghan dogs—to have slain so noble an animal. Let us take one more look at him ... see if he is quite dead."

Wilton rode up to the spot where Carrington had fallen, and the latter followed on foot. The horse was quite dead; stark and stiffening. Carrington bent down over the carcase of the animal, and patted it, for the last time, on the crest. He then took out a pair of pistols from the holsters, observing that he might find them useful; fastened them into his sash, and returned to do his best to infuse new energy into the men, whose short-comings, at such a time, he had viewed with horror and dismay.

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And on they went, on that perilous march, discipline every hour waning more and more, and every hour the enemy increasing in numbers and in daring. On they went, struggling through the dreadful snow: on they went, a wild rabble, the confusion waxing more and more terrible—the horror of the retreat more pro-

found. Paralysed, helpless, many perfectly idiotic, they fell most easy sacrifices. Little resistance had they to offer—little resistance to the cruel enemy—little resistance to the cruel cold... Soon after noon, on that second day, the advance was ordered to halt.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DREADFUL SNOW.

"Theirs was the dreadful snow—who trembling bore
Their shuddering limbs along; and pace by pace
Saw in that white sheet plashed with human gore
The dread familiar look of some brave face,
Distorted—ghastly—with a lingering trace
Of life and sorrow in its pleading glance—
A dying dream of parted love's embrace,—
A hope of succour brought by desperate chance,
Or wild unconscious stare of Death's delirious trance."

Mrs. Norton.

ANOTHER night and a fearful one. It closed upon thousands of men of all classes, Europeans and natives, soldiers and camp-followers, huddled together in a dense mass of sentient, suffering humanity; and among them, confusedly mingled, were horses, and camels, and mules, and ponies, and bullocks, the whole making one immense congeries of predestined carrion—a rare banquet for the birds of prey.

And when day arose, dawning again upon many a stiffening corpse, stretched in the great common winding-sheet—the enemy began early with their rare work of cowardice and treachery. Benumbed by the cold, many crippled outright, the helpless sepoys lay at the mercy of the Affghans; they looked around them at the scene of horror; their only safety was in flight—and on went the great rolling tide

towards the mouth of the Koord Caubul Pass. But British courage, though yesterday it had been subdued, was not extinct in the breasts of those stout English soldiers, with whom served Arthur Carrington. A body of the enemy were in front of them; hovering like a flight of vultures, eager to make the reeking carrion their prey. A staff-officer—one of the general's aides-de-camp, had placed himself at their head.

"Now, my boys," cried Arthur Carrington, addressing himself to the men of the company which he was commanding. "Now is our time to show that we have the true stuff still remaining in us . . . up, my brave fellows—one good charge—and you will see that they dare not face us."

The word of command was given, and on they went like true British soldiers, right at the Affghan force. The enemy looked at them doubtfully, and fled.

"I told you so, my fine fellows," cried Carrington, when his men were brought up on the brow of a hill; "I told you how it would be, my boys. They dare not look us in the face, when once we go right at them. Keep to this . . . keep to this . . . and it will be a triumph the whole way to Jullalabad . . . steady . . . steady there . . . cease firing, can't you? We have no cartridges to spare . . . and we have a long journey before us yet."

A long journey, indeed, and the real horrors of the march yet to begin. THE KOORD CAUBUL PASS—it yawned in terrific grandeur to receive them. On either side tremendous cliffs . . . huge masses of beet-

ling rock overhanging the deep ravine, cast a shadow over the road, "rough and narrow," which wound between them.

"——— At noontide there
'Twas twilight, and at sunset blackest night."

And beneath, a foaming torrent, unbound by the mighty frost, leapt wildly along, through channels of frozen snow.

* * * * * *

And above, around, on every side, the Affghan marksmen, perched aloft, with their unerring jezails, or lying in wait, on lower ridges, with their long sharp knives, looked wistfully down upon the doomed army, as, slowly, confusedly—a dense, undistinguishable mass of living matter, it streamed into the jaws of that mighty defile. . .

* * * * *

And on went the British army—an army no more . . . shut in between the impending walls of that grim, infernal passage; now plunging through the impetuous mountain stream, now huddling on confusedly through the narrow defiles; whilst thick and fast fell the deadly showers from the jezails of the Ghilzye marksmen. And there through that dreadful pass rode delicate English ladies with tender infants in their arms . . rode through the thick fire of the enemy, on wretched ponies, or on jolting camels—or falling with the beasts that bore them, shot down by the Affghan jezailchees, struggled on with rent and frozen garments, along the slippery snow, jostled and unregarded by the teeming multitude—stumbling over the stark bodies of the dy-

ing and the dead. There wretched Hindostanee sepoys, soldiers no longer, threw away their arms, and fled—seizing whatever cattle came in their way, casting away the baggage, ransacking it in search of food or clothing, riding on through the mass of camp-followers, and treading down all who came in their way. There wretched native women threw away their children to perish in the snow; and hurried on, scared and panic-struck, till their limbs refused to bear them further, and they fell exhausted, agonised, to die the dreadful death of slow congelation. There naked Hindostanee camp-followers sunk down, maimed, crippled by the cruel frost, racked by the pains of hell—the devouring cold eating into their flesh, and turning it to rottenness before its time. And there, one on another, fast and thick, fell the bodies of men—soldiers, and camp-followers, European and natives, beneath the murderous fire of the Ghilzyes, who lined that dreadful pass.

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But even through that fearful pass, though great the slaughter, thousands struggled unhurt—the strong vitality within them sustaining them through scenes of suffering and of horror almost without a parallel in the history of the great world. Thousands struggled unhurt—emerging from the defile in safety—but miserable, most miserable, the lot which awaited them. Another night spent in that dreadful snow; snow above, snow beneath, snow on every side. Thickly, blindingly it fell on the remnant of the British force.

Another night and another morning. The same scene of mad confusion. But little discipline re-

mained. At day-break one common impulse moved all the native troops ; and on they hurried to the front. Of nothing thought they but of self-preservation. Every other human feeling—pride, pity, courage, generosity, seemed to have been dried up within them. The strong man dragged the weak from the horse he was riding, or smote him, till he fell from the camel's back—and vaulted into his seat. Men of the same creed—of the same calling—almost of the same family—wrestled with each other for life. In the agony of despair men bound to each other by common ties, became mutual enemies ; bitter, unrelenting, even to the death.

On that day the English ladies, with their children, were delivered up to the custody of the Affghan leader, who pledged himself to protect them, and nobly redeemed his pledge. On that day the slaughter of our unresisting troops was more fearful than on any preceding it. On that day, before night-fall, the British army was reduced to some two hundred European soldiers, artillery and infantry, and a hundred and fifty native troopers. All the rest were mere rabble—the halt and the blind, the paralysed and the panic-struck. Painfully crawled many a cripple ; and many a blind man groped his way through the snow which had destroyed him, only to be ridden down by his own people, or unresistingly butchered by the cruel knives of the Affghan foe.

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Arthur Carrington still lived—still fought ; and beside him rode Mark Wilton. A small handful of

their men struggled on behind them, mixed up in one compact body with a few men of other corps. They were the fighting remnant of that army of five thousand men, which a few days before had marched out of the Caubul city. In this little band of stout-hearted, gallant soldiers, were many European officers; for though several had fallen, the officers had borne up to the last, surviving the horrors of the four first days of massacre, in numbers far exceeding the proportion which they bore to the men of the force. Though especial marks of the Affghan jezailchees, and though always in the van—always in the midst of danger—the shot falling around them like hail—numbers of them were spared to witness the entire destruction of the army. The great exertions they had made in behalf of others had saved themselves. Their higher *morale* had sustained them throughout the horrors of that dreadful retreat. They had never forgotten that they were British soldiers—British officers—never forgotten what it became them to do in the dire extremity into which Providence had cast them. They had fainted not—they had failed not; and because they had done the most they had suffered the least, amidst those scenes of unexampled horrors.

Amongst these surviving officers was Rivers. He had seen the gradual destruction—the dissolution, it should be written, of the sepoy force. Hundreds, nay, thousands had been massacred; they had fallen like sheep into the hands of the butchers, and died with no greater power of resistance. But the knives and the jezails of the enemy had not done all the work.

The elements of dissolution were within; the sepoy army had gradually melted away—had resolved itself into the crude materials of which it was formed, and become a rabble of men bound by no ties, owning no authority; a herd of scattered individuals, without unity of action, without common obligations. Rivers had seen file after file die this moral death, ceasing to be soldiers, and suffering as irresponsible men. He had seen them throw away their arms; he had seen them burn their accoutrements, that they might derive a moment's warmth from the flames; he had seen them, under the pressure of their unparalleled sufferings, turning their hands against each other, fighting for the means of present safety; and in vain he had protested—in vain he had exhorted—in vain he had offered large bribes to those who would follow him as true soldiers. Idle were all his efforts: idle the efforts of his brother officers. Mistaking the source from which flowed the only possible hope of safety, they had deserted their officers; and, as miserable stragglers, fallen an easier prey to the savage wretches who were hovering over them, hungry for the great slaughter.

Rivers himself had struggled on like a man of high courage and of iron frame. Though a broken-hearted, wretched creature; gaunt, pallid, with sunken cheeks and hollow eyes, and emaciated frame; his powers of endurance—of action—were stupendous. He was very tall, and of almost gigantic proportions; and he rode a large, boney, coal-black horse, which seemed to possess as much extraordinary mettle, as much extraor-

dinary vigour as its rider. The animal, though it had scarcely tasted food for days, had lost but little heart—but little power. Often floundering in the snow, as solid masses of it balled in his feet, or striking his limbs against scattered baggage, or the wheels of gun-carriages, in the vast confusion of the march, the *Black Douglas*, as Rivers delighted to call him, lost none of his high courage, but quickly recovering himself, throwing back his head, and snorting in the frosty air, bounded on again, as though proud of his rider—proud of the conspicuous example of gallantry which Rivers was setting to all around him. That brave fellow had indeed been performing prodigies of valour. He had more than once been surrounded by Affghan horsemen; but he had seemed to bear a charmed life. Reckless on his own account, nay, almost courting danger, the Affghan sabres had gleamed around him, and the Affghan bullets had whizzed past him, but he was unscathed—untouched. His long, sinewy arm had dealt destruction around; his heavy sword was indented, smeared with blood; its very handle bent on one side, so violent had been the work it had done. Often had he been seen, whilst *Black Douglas* stood still with his fore-legs thrust firmly out before him, standing up in his stirrups, raising himself to the utmost height above his saddle, and smiting down with terrific energy, cleaving and crushing through flesh and muscle, as the Affghan horsemen gathered around him, and dared to give him battle. He had truly avenged the death of more than one comrade; smiting the murderer in the very act; and once he had been seen carrying

across his saddle-bow, the body of a brother officer, whom he had rescued, ere life was extinct, from the clutches of a fiend who was about to sever with his cold, bright blade, the windpipe of the wounded man. No one had done so much; no one had suffered so little. After the first day's march, he had desponded; he had grieved over the failure of his endeavours to preserve his men from destruction; but now that there was no hope; now that his regiment had melted away before him, in spite of all his efforts to preserve its integrity; now that none were relying on him, that none looked to him for succour; now that he stood alone, quite alone in the world—and that it was only left him to die; it seemed as though a new life had been granted to him—a new spirit, strong in the mighty energy of despair. The past faded away from his memory; he lived but in the wild excitement of the present. He did not feel the cruel cold; he did not fear the cruel enemy. He shuddered not as the death-shriek smote on his ears; he closed not his eyes as the ghastly spectacle of murdered friends met him at every turn. On he went, powerful to avenge—making no calculations—looking never into the future—recking not of life, or of death; on he went, as one over whom a mighty Providence had cast the shield of its protection; in action more than a man—in suffering less; so reckless, and yet so safe, that many an Affghan looked at him from a distance with superstitious wonderment and awe, thinking that the Christian host had an avenging demigod in its ranks.

He had joined the little band—the remnant of the

fighting men, with whom fought Arthur Carrington and Mark Wilton. Captain Witherington, too, was of that party. A few troopers, not in all amounting to the strength of a single troop, were with him. He had been gallantly mounted from the first; and being a man who had always taken the utmost interest in his stud, he had quitted Caubul with three or four led horses, one of which he had lent to Arthur Carrington, and the remainder, though not before he had taken a re-mount, had been sacrificed during the march. He was a cool, wary, intrepid officer; and had always exercised great influence over the minds of his men. The greater number of the mounted sepoys now with the remnant of the force, were men of his own troop—men who had followed, because he led. They had never quitted him. Every night, when the force was halted, he had systematically mustered them by name; he had shown, in the most unmistakeable manner, that he took an interest in the individual well-being of every man under his charge; and by his extreme coolness—for he was as collected, as systematic in all his proceedings, whatever danger threatened, whatever horror surrounded him, as though he had been on a regimental parade—inspired them with unbounded confidence in him, and did much to strengthen their confidence in themselves. And yet there was no man in that entire force which a few days before had left Caubul, who was moved in all that he did by a stronger desire to save himself: in whom the idea of self-preservation was so all-pervading—so all-absorbing. He knew that his safety, under God, depended more upon his cool-

ness than on aught beside—that the safety of the force was only to be preserved by general collectiveness, general order, and discipline—that disorganisation must be fatal to the troops—fatal to all who sought to save themselves by abandoning their comrades. This one idea never forsook him; for ever, ever before him—ever, ever as he rode on through the dying and the dead—ever as fearful sounds smote upon his ears, and ghastly spectacles met his eyes—ever as he led his men to the charge against mighty odds, and he saw them falling around him—ever before him, plainly, palpably, as in actual existence, was the sweet sad face of his wife.

And near him rode Afzool Khan, his Affghan servant, his dark eye fixed steadily on his master. He had from the commencement of the retreat ridden close beside the captain. He was armed; but he had used neither sword nor pistol. Both remained unhandled in his belt. Ever and anon he laid a finger upon the weapons, as though to assure himself that they remained securely in his possession; but he seemed to have no other care, no other thought, than closely to follow his master, and keep his dark eye steadily upon him.

* * * * * *

It was on the 12th of January. Morning had not dawned, when the little force was again in motion towards the Jugdulluck Valley. Their early movements had somewhat disconcerted the enemy, who were not prepared to see them so soon pursuing their march; but in a little while the Affghans had mustered again in force, and were hanging on the rear of our little band, or pushing on in advance to intercept its pro-

gress. And on they went into the mouth of the stupendous defile, with its overhanging walls of precipitous rock, closing in on either side the difficult, narrow road, and casting o'er it their awful shadows. Terrible in its naked horrors that gloomy pass—more terrible, as it was encountered by the remnant of the British force. The malice of man had raised a fearful barrier—had cast huge branches of prickly wood, formidable, impassable *chevaux-de-frise*, across the mouth of that fearful defile; and there for a while the handful of brave soldiers, who had struggled thus far against grievous obstacles, halted, and gazed with blank horror upon the mighty impediment which, as a last crowning act of consummate cruelty, the enemy had cast in their way.

A pause—a pause of fearful suspense and uncertainty; then a scene of wild confusion—soldiers and camp-followers, horsemen and footmen rushed madly at the barrier; and shouting with exultation, the Afghan hordes rushed down upon our miserable people. It was the crowning horror of that horrid march. The butchers—the sheep—and the mighty shambles.

There Rivers, on *Black Douglas*, the head of the noble animal still erect, his ears forward, his red nostrils snorting defiance, stood up once again in his stirrups, and raised aloft his sinewy arm. His face was besmeared with blood, not his own—his clothes were rent and soiled—his eyes red from sleepless nights and the blinding snow, his features drawn and dragged like those of a corpse—the white saliva on his lips. There he stood at bay, nobly. And as his own people,

soldiers and camp-followers, rushed at the fearful barrier, and the savage Affghans joined in the great deed of blood, consummating the sublime tragedy which days before they had commenced, he stood erect, and with power which had never failed him, smote right and left the cruel enemy—smote them with an unerring hand, mighty to protect, mighty to avenge. Arthur Carrington was there, too. Who would have known him then? Who would have recognised in that pale, thin, ghastly face, the countenance erst beaming with joyous animation, the rosy, sunny-hearted aspect of the noble, generous youth? There he was—a few, a very few of the brave fellows whom he had led from Caubul, still close at his side; there he was, his clear, sonorous voice now hoarse and husky, shouting in vain through that hellish din. His men were mostly mounted, for at that time all were cavalry who could seize a horse upon the march, and they pressed on gallantly beside him. Shortening his reins, and pressing his heels against the flanks of his horse, he rode manfully at the barrier; but the animal, not equal to such a task, foundered, and fell heavily forward. Another moment, and Arthur Carrington felt a hand upon his throat, and saw a knife uplifted to smite him.

Another moment and the quick steel would have been deep in the gurgling throat. Rivers was near at hand; he saw his friend's horse stumble, saw him hurled to the ground, saw the Affghan murderers surround him. He touched with his spurs the sides of the *Black Douglas* and one bound brought him within

reach of the miscreant, whose gleaming blade was at Arthur Carrington's throat—one bound, and that long sinewy arm was up-lifted to smite the smiter; but it descended not; the blow was arrested. Close to his ear he heard the discharge of a pistol, and almost at the same moment the wretch who had been standing butcher-like over Carrington's prostrate body, fell a corpse upon the living man; a bullet had entered his brain.

"They have forestalled me," muttered Rivers, turning to see who had performed in his place, the part of the executioner; and he saw Captain Witherington charge the barrier closely followed by a mounted Affghan, who, as he rode forward, was replacing a pistol in his girdle. He knew the man to be Witherington's servant, Afzool Khan, he of whom his master often spoke, in whose gratitude he reposed such confidence, and he said to himself, "Of a certainty he was right; the man *has* gratitude, and he has saved his master's friend."

The muttered words were still on his lips, when a shot from a jezail struck *Black Douglas* on the forehead. The noble animal made one spasmodic plunge, then reared, and fell backwards.

Carrington, who by this time had regained his feet, seized his fallen friend and drew him from beneath the heavy carcase of the lifeless animal. Rivers had sustained no great injury; he at least was sensible of none; and was presently standing erect beside his friend: his good sword had never left his hand.

"Let us on,"—cried Carrington—"we may force the barrier. It is death to remain here."

"Death, any way," returned Rivers—"it is time too.

No; here I make my stand—here where my old friend has fallen"—and he placed one foot upon the carcase of his lifeless horse . . . " here I will make a stand . . . here as well as on any other spot—why not die here where so many have fallen. It will be a rare cemetery."

" No—no—on, my good fellow," cried Carrington—" we may struggle through the accursed barrier yet. We may live still to see our friends. On—on—our journey is nearly over—on—on—the way is but short."

" Our journey is nearly over," said Rivers—" the way, too, is very short" . . . and, as he spoke, his eyes glared with a strange light, which, even in that dreadful hour, when little heed was given even to strangest things, seemed to his friend like the light of insanity. " You may go—do not care for me. Save yourself—may God preserve you, my fine fellow. Life for you may have many charms . . . for me it has—not one."

" I will not leave you," said Carrington; and as fast and thick the bullets whizzed around them, and the Affghan butchers pressed on with their gleaming knives . . . as loud rose the cry for mercy, loud the death-shriek —and horsemen and footmen rushed madly at the fearful barricade, few to escape, hundreds to perish, Ernest Rivers and Arthur Carrington stood, side by side, dealing destruction around them. Many pressed on against the gallant pair—many but to fall, maimed, mutilated, beneath the strong arms of the heroic Englishmen. To Rivers superhuman strength had been granted in this fearful crisis; he fought with the vigour, the energy of a giant; and more than once, but for his quick eye, his sinewy arm, would Arthur Carrington have fallen be-

neath the sabres of the swarming Affghans. He had taken up his position before the body of the *Black Douglas;* and scarcely moving from the spot, he had given dreadful evidence of his prowess in the ghastly slain huddled in a heap before him.

And there they stood at bay, those two friends—stood as something more than men, as creatures whose reckless daring, whose mighty power, whose strange impunity at such a time, filled the Affghan foe with wonderment and awe. Many a brave Mussulman, burning with fiercest zeal, looked doubtfully at the white demons, and turned away to attack an enemy of attributes more human. "The dogs!—they waver," screamed Rivers —"at them, my friends; who will follow?—there are brave hearts among us yet—On! on!" He raised his heavy sword above his head, looked round him, saw that at his back were a few well-known faces—shouted again to them to advance, and was about, with lowered blade, to plunge forward into the midst of a swarm of Affghan swordsmen, when, uttering one loud cry, and throwing both his arms aloft, he fell backwards upon the carcase of *Black Douglas.* The jezail of a Ghiljee marksman had sent a ball to his heart.

The enemy raised a shout of exultation. . . . Carrington had seen his friend fall backwards, had seen the death-agony in his face. His first impulse was to cover the body of the gallant fellow who had fought so nobly beside him—to save it if possible from those worst indignities which he knew the infuriated ghazeeas would wreak upon the brave man's corpse. But the fall of Rivers had given new confidence to a party of

the enemy, who now rushed forward yelling like fiends, and Carrington was presently surrounded. The crowd was fortunately so thick, that he was lost sight of in the confusion, and when, after awhile he had contrived to struggle through it unhurt, he found himself at a part of the barrier which had been ridden down by the mounted soldiers, and which seemed to afford an outlet from the dreadful shambles in which he had been playing so conspicuous a part.

Still he bethought himself of the corpse of Ernest Rivers, and a momentary thought flashed upon him with a spasm of pain, that life might not be extinct in the body of his poor friend, and that the knives of the Affghans, with a refinement of cruelty, would complete the dreadful work of death. He would return then at any risk to seek the body of his friend. Could he leave such noble remains to the butchery of those vile blood-hounds?

He was returning, when a small party of European soldiers, carrying off two or three of their wounded comrades, appeared at the open part of the barrier, and exhorted Carrington to fly with them. They assured him that they had seen the body of Rivers; that life was utterly extinct; that it was stretched across the carcase of the black charger.

"There let it lie, then," said Arthur Carrington, "for there did he wish to die."

And on they went. They cleared the barrier, and though encumbered by the wounded men, whom Carrington's little party never thought of deserting, much as the encumbrance retarded their progress, they

were soon in the open country. There they came up with another party, and on they went painfully together—weak and weary, tortured with thirst—and exposed to the fire of occasional bodies of the enemy, who appeared to be hovering in every part of the country.

And as they advanced, they came up with many ghastly corpses—the bodies of men wounded at that dreadful barrier, who had struggled on to die by the way side, or to be unresistingly butchered by the Affghans. Among these, Carrington recognised one familiar face, the sight of which, rigid in death, filled his heart with new anguish. He saw the body of a British officer, lying, face downwards, on the ground. He knelt down; raised it with his own hands; and recognised the well-known features of poor Mark Wilton.

He appeared to have been shot in the side, for his coat was saturated with blood. He was quite dead; it seemed as though he had fallen from his horse, and had been dragged some distance by the stirrup-leathers, for there was a portion of one, with the stirrup-iron, still around his right foot; his head, too, was bare, much bruised, and lacerated; his dark hair clotted with blood.

Arthur Carrington felt no hope as he unbuttoned the frock coat of the dead man, and laid his hand almost mechanically upon the pulseless heart. There was no life there ; but as he felt the cold flesh, his fingers touched something hard, which lay on the dead man's breast. Arthur drew it forth. It was a locket ; fast-

ened round the neck of the body by a gold chain—a locket with the initials A. B. engraven upon the case. It contained a long curl of bright brown hair.

Carrington was deeply moved. "Adela Balfour!" he exclaimed—"my poor Adela"—and his eye fell upon the letter enclosed in wax-cloth, and sewn inside the breast of Wilton's coat—the letter which he had entrusted to poor Mark. "My sweet Adela, wilt thou ever hear from, ever again see, thine own betrothed?"

He called to some men who stood by to assist him in moving the body. They were men of Wilton's own regiment; and they willingly lent an aiding hand to carry the corpse aside, and place it in a position where it was more likely to escape the notice of the enemy. And they found a spot not very remote—a small pit, partly covered over with underwood—a grave, indeed, ready prepared to receive it—into which they lowered the body; and as Arthur Carrington pushed down with his heel some fragments of earth, and cast upon the corpse a few loose stones, he uttered the solemn words, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust;" and as he turned away from the grave, he said in low tones, most reverentially, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand upon the latter day upon the earth; and that though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet shall I see God." Then he pursued his miserable march.

* * * * *

And yet another day dawned upon them—another most wretched day. It was the 13th of January. A

small party of Europeans—scarce twenty files—and a few miserable camp-followers were all that remained of that great multitude, which a week before had marched out of the capital of Affghanistan. In this small party was a large proportion of British officers, who presented a gallant front, and moved steadily on, in spite of the brisk fire of the enemy hovering around them, which occasionally thinned their ranks. Weary and weak in body, but still strong in hope and courage, Arthur Carrington struggled on. He had lost his forage-cap on the preceding day, and had wrapped round his head a roll of white linen, which had belonged to some murdered man. His own sword had been broken in his hand, but he carried that of the dead Walsingham; and he rode a large boney horse, spare, fleshless, and weak, from want of food, which he had seized on seeing a native trooper fall lifeless from its back.

And onward pressed that little band—steady, compact—the enemy mustering stronger and stronger on every side. Arthur Carrington was more sanguine than he had been since the commencement of that dreadful march. Providence had preserved him so long—he had escaped such unparalleled dangers, in so miraculous a manner, that he now believed that he would be spared, by the same kind God, once again to clasp his Adela to his heart.

This conviction was strong in his mind, when a shot struck an officer beside him, and the poor fellow rolled from his horse. Carrington alone halted—halted, and dismounted. The man was not dead, but he had re-

ceived his death wound; the bullet had entered his neck, behind the ear, and the blood was gurgling out of his mouth. Carrington shouted to a medical officer who was with the remnant of the force; but the party, which was pressing on at a brisk pace, was already beyond the reach of his voice. He could do nothing for the dying man; but he could not bear to leave him alone to perish—perhaps to be mutilated by the barbarous foe; so he knelt beside him for a while, wiping away the blood from his mouth, and doing the little that could be done to relieve the poor fellow's sufferings.

His situation was one of extreme danger, cut off from his comrades; and feeling that if a party of the enemy came up with them, both would fall into their hands, to be inhumanly butchered, Carrington endeavoured to raise the body of the dying man, and to lift it across his saddle bows. And he succeeded—but he only lifted a corpse.

He dragged the body behind a bush, remounted, and rode on. He had not proceeded far when he saw by the way side, beneath a tree, the body of a cavalry officer. A grey Arab horse was standing by, seeming almost to regard with tender concern the scene that was passing before him. Carrington knew the horse. It was the favourite charger of Captain Witherington.

He slackened his pace, and saw beneath the tree the face of his old friend. His head was raised upon a little mound of earth, and he lay stretched upon his back, whilst o'er him bent an Affghan who was tearing open his vest, plundering the prostrate body, or, perhaps, preparing it for the murderous knife.

A minute more, and Carrington had reached the spot. He saw his friend move, he saw the Affghan, whose back was towards him, busied with his villainous work. The young man's sword was in his hand; he was not one to hesitate. In another moment the knife might have been pushing its way to the brave heart of Captain Witherington. Carrington raised himself in his stirrups, uplifted his arm, and, with all his remaining strength, smote down with a tranverse sweep at the neck of the kneeling Affghan.

He saw Captain Witherington stretch out his arms, seemingly in supplication; he saw the white lips of his friend moving, as the heavy blow descended; he saw the Affghan fall lifeless on the body of the English captain, and then he flung himself from his horse.

And as he stooped down to remove the gory body from that of his wounded friend, he heard Witherington pronounce his name; and then all was terrible confusion in his brain. What had he done? What dreadful deed had he committed? A weight of horror had descended upon him enough to crush him to the earth. The body which he was raising in his arms was the body of Afzool Khan. The man had died in the service of his master.

The brain of Arthur Carrington reeled, and he staggered like a drunken man. He had murdered the devoted Affghan, whilst in the act of staunching the blood which streamed from a wound in his master's side. Oh, that he had perished at the barrier!

Witherington spoke to the young man; but poor Carrington heard not the words he uttered; all was dark-

ness—all confusion within. He was horror-struck, stupified; he stood aghast, in almost idiotic terror, looking at the deed he had done.

And then he heard a loud noise, seemingly close beside him—the report of a gun almost in his ear; a bright fire seemed to flash before his eyes; and then all was utter darkness—outer and inner darkness. He fell as one dead.

* * * * *

When reason again dawned upon him, the sun was low in the heavens, and the long shadows of the trees stretched across the dreary plain. It appeared to him that he was lying beneath the very tree near which he had fallen—the tree beneath which he had seen the pale face of his friend Witherington—the tree beneath which he had committed that accursed act, the knowledge of which, though suffering intense bodily anguish, now constituted the chief torment of his most pitiable condition. A ball had fractured his jaw; the pains of hell had gat hold of him—but what so intolerable as the knowledge of the dreadful fact that he had murdered the man who had saved his life? He raised himself on one arm, groaning pitiably, and looked around him with throbbing eyes, to which even the subdued light of the coming even-tide was fierce and painful glare. He was alone. He felt certain that he had not moved—that the tree was the very tree beneath which he had fallen, the very tree beneath which he had done that accursed deed; but Witherington was not there—the corpse of the murdered Affghan was not there—there were no signs of either, save two large pools of gore.

He raised himself—he sat up; the pain he endured was intense; he was very weak; he was suffering intolerable thirst; but his limbs had sustained no injury, and he felt that he was capable of motion. He could not lie where he was, beside the pool of most innocent blood he had shed—better to struggle on, though safety he could not look for, though life he felt could never be other than a grievous burden to him. So on he struggled; now tottering forward, now crawling, making his way on hands and knees over the sharp stones, which gored him sadly—but he could not feel those wounds. On he struggled, ever and anon pausing to look around him—but save a few horsemen in the distance, and the birds of prey which were screaming over their bloody carrion, he saw no signs of life.

And o'er the country fell the shades of evening, and still he went struggling on. Darkness could not shut out from him the agonised face of Afzool Khan, bodily anguish could not overbear the mental horror which had fastened on his soul. The fear of death was nothing to him—the future nothing, with that dreadful *past* fresh in his mind. Only thought he of what he had done.

And on he went,—struggling, crawling, groping, through the darkness. Once he thought he saw before him a sweet, smiling, bright-eyed face—once he thought he saw a small white hand beckoning to him; but the ghastly features of Afzool Khan thrust themselves before the bright picture, and over that little hand spirted a fountain of human blood. And hope never dawned again upon him.

He struggled on, he knew not how, through the darkness; moved on without a purpose, to no fixed goal; and after a while—many hours might have elapsed, or not one, he knew not—he thought he heard the sound of human voices around him; and presently a bright light gleamed before his face, so bright that he closed his eyes; and then he felt a hand upon him, some one was raising his head. He was near the habitations of men.

He opened his eyes, and thought he saw a woman's face—the face of a young Affghan woman. She bent over him; she spoke, but the only answer he rendered back was a piteous groan. He thought, too, that there were children around him—And presently, the woman went her way, and again returned, bringing a bowl in her hands; and she stooped down, and placed it to his lips.

He drank slowly, painfully—but still the draught was most delicious. He thought it was milk; it seemed to fill him with new life and vigour.

He spoke, as best he could—unintelligible the language, indistinct the voice—rendering back his thanks to the doer of this Christian deed. He spoke in a language foreign to her; and she raised her hand, with a gesture exhorting to silence. Then there was a noise—a woman's shriek, a struggle—and in place of the gentle female face, there was the ferocious countenance of a bearded man.

* * * * *

And the life-blood of Arthur Carrington spirted over the woman's garments.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CONCLUSION.

"They who have steeped their souls in prayer,
Can every anguish calmly bear.........
They who have learnt to pray aright,
From pain's dark well draw up delight.........
They who God's face can understand,
Feel not the motions of His hand."

R. M. Milnes.

It was the beginning of the hot weather in Calcutta. The month of March, with its arid, mid-day heats, foreshadowing the intolerable sultriness to come, had been fairly entered upon by the denizens of the City of Palaces. The Balfours had returned to Chowringhee. They had not quitted it since that miserable day, when the intelligence of the massacre of the Caubul force had burst upon them in all its complicated horror. Adela could not be removed. Before she quitted Dr. Winter's house, alarming symptoms of fever had manifested themselves; and the doctor had given it as his opinion —an opinion confirmed by the Balfours' family physician—that it would be madness at such a time to remove the sufferer to Titaghur. She was, therefore, taken no further than her brother's house in Chowringhee.

Long and desperate had been the struggle; but she had lived. After weeks of severe suffering, she was pronounced to be convalescent. She rose from the bed of sickness a new being. She rose with a new heart.

It was a day in the second week of March—Adela was in her own room; and Mrs. Balfour was sitting beside the couch, on which the convalescent was lying—very pale was she, very thin, very weak; but still very beautiful. There was a sweeter expression on her face than ever there had been before.

Mrs. Balfour had been reading to her; but the book rested in her lap, whilst she was answering a question which the invalid had put to her—a question which, had Mary put it a few weeks before, would have raised a smile of ridicule upon the red lips of Adela Balfour. Those lips, now so pale, were slightly parted, with an expression of expectant interest, as Ellen Balfour, in that sweetest, kindest, true woman's voice, began to utter solemn truths, mixed with words of kindliest consolation, and to awaken new feelings, new sympathies, new aspirations in the breast of that suffering girl.

And where was Mary? She was in the drawing-room. In the drawing-room, and not alone; Herbert Grey sat beside her, in the dim light of that large cool room; the glass windows, the venetian blinds were closed; and a heavy punkah, pulled from a lower room, swung freely over their heads.

They had been for some time conversing with each other. There had been much to say—much to hear—many explanations to offer, many apologies to give and to receive—much pleasant embarrassment on both sides—and on both sides sincerity and candour. Mary Balfour sat there the affianced wife of Herbert Grey.

"And you could really run away from me," said Mary, "could really betake yourself, and without a

word of explanation, to the Upper Provinces, at a time, when—as you say now—your heart was so full."

"Very full," returned Herbert Grey,—"but not quite without a word of explanation? There was an explanation—to your brother."

"Yes—he has told me—since your return; but how long was your conduct quite inexplicable—how long did I ponder over your departure—conjecturing, imagining . . . and yet trying to persuade myself all the while, that it was 'no business of mine.'"

"It was very miserable," said Herbert Grey, "and no words can tell what I suffered—until, until, a little hope began to dawn upon me, when I received a letter from our best of good friends, Winter . . . I need not tell you, dearest, why I ran away from you . . . you know now that story—a very sad one—too well. But you do not know all that that good soul Winter has done for me—for you—for us both."

"And do *you* know all?" asked Mary, with a downcast blush.

"Yes—my sweet one . . . I do know all. Had he not told me the whole truth I should not have known one half of his generous, unselfish conduct—so noble, so like Winter. He did not tell me all in his letter; but enough to bring me to Calcutta, as soon as I could, consistently with my obligations to good Dr. Christian, return. As I was entitled to a more extended leave of absence—not having taken any for some years—I purposed to have applied for another month; but his letter determined me to return. I came back to Calcutta . . . and without reporting myself, without

communicating with any other friends, had several interviews with our dear doctor. His bearing towards me was that of a kindly affectionate father. He inquired, minutely, into the condition of my pecuniary affairs. I prepared a written statement of them; and to my surprise found them in a less desperate condition than I had supposed. There was in fact, nothing desperate in their condition. I had long been reluctant to examine my accounts. A weakness—a very foolish one it is, I acknowledge; but I would always face any thing rather than my pecuniary accounts. I have been every month paying off large sums, but little thinking of the diminution which I was making in my pile of debts . . . for I had not sufficiently considered my increasing income—and I knew that when I first began to pay off, it would take some years to complete the work—not daring, indeed, to anticipate that I should be so fortunate as I have been lately. Still the aspect of affairs was not very encouraging. I was greatly in debt. The demands upon me were not pressing; still I thought it would be culpable to think of marriage, as long as I was thus involved. Dr. Winter seemed to entertain a different opinion. He said that the debts were not so heavy, but that in two or three years they might be paid off; and that, too, so as to leave a sufficiency of present income to support a comfortable—though certainly not a magnificent establishment. Then he said a great deal about your character, my own Mary—something which my heart acknowledged to be true; and so much, too, about your

feelings, which I scarcely ventured to believe could be true; and then he pointed out a way, in which he said it would be easy with such assistance—such assistance in the way of recommendations and securities, as he and your good brother could give—would only be too happy to give—a way to arrange my affairs in such a manner, as to liquidate my debts, gradually, but effectually—and yet to leave me a comfortable income. And then, my own Mary—then, then, when I still hesitated, when still my pride—my selfish unselfishness—stood in the way of my happiness, when still I refused to be comforted, in spite of all that the good doctor could say, he carried me off one day to your brother, and made me speak out to him. And Balfour was so generous . . . so considerate—so like himself. He said that he had been longing to take the initiative, and to send for me—but that some foolish feelings of pride had restrained him; but that he had enough of concealments—he had tasted bitterly the evils of insincerity—he had sacrificed one sister to an untruth, and he would not sacrifice another. And then he confirmed much which the good doctor had said; and added, that he could perceive nothing in my circumstances, as stated to him by Winter, to raise an insuperable obstacle in the way of the consummation of my fondest hopes . . . There was only one point on which he desired to be explicit—there was one thing which he said he could never bring himself to suffer again—and that one thing you may be sure, my own Mary, I did not wish to press upon him, for it was a *Long Engagement.*"

Mary said something in a very low voice. Herbert

thought it was, "you were right." The tears were glistening in her eyes. She was thinking of her poor sister.

And Herbert Grey resumed: "For all that has happened so propitiously, we must thank our good friend, Winter—nay, not quite for all, your brother's generosity, seconding the doctor's, deserves at least a portion of our gratitude. But for Winter, never should I have dared to look the truth in the face; it seemed all so hopeless—and to have gone on, in my opinion, so culpable. I looked upon the consummation of my wishes—my cherished, most cherished hopes—as a bare impossibility. It did not seem to be environed by one encouraging circumstance—all appeared dark in the distance. But all appeared so different when he began to illumine it with his friendly suggestions; he taught me to behave more like a man, never to be borne down beneath seeming difficulties, but to look them boldly in the face. I think I have got rid of some of my weaknesses. I hope so, Mary, for with all of them upon me—all, as you first knew me—I am sure that I should be very unworthy of so great a blessing as your love. I am beginning well, I think," he added, cheerfully; "you see how candid, how unreserved I am . . . talking sagely about 'money matters,' as though we had been married a year. Ah! I know some men who have been ruined by not making *confidantes* of their wives. Perhaps I might have swelled the list, but for the seasonable lesson I have learnt. There is little hope for a married man, if he falls into difficulties and conceals the truth from his wife."

"Little hope for him," said Mary, smiling through her tears, "if he conceals any thing from his wife."

At this moment a servant entered the room, and announced Dr. Winter. The good doctor came forward, and it seemed as he advanced, that there was an expression of pain upon his face; it was but a momentary expression; it was gone before he had shaken hands with the young lovers; gone before he had opened his lips to speak.

And when he spoke, he spoke gaily, apologising, in the first instance, to Herbert and Mary, for intruding upon them at such a time; and adding, that he could not refrain from looking in at the Balfours' house, as he had excellent news to communicate.

"Let us have it, by all means," said Herbert Grey.

Mary was quite pale with anxiety.

"The fact is," said Winter, "that intelligence has been received from Affghanistan, certain intelligence that—". . .

Mary laid her hand upon Herbert's arm, and her little fingers grasped it spasmodically, as the Doctor continued,

——"Certain intelligence that Captain Witherington is alive. He is with the other prisoners... his escape most strange, most miraculous. A letter... a parcel, in fact, seems to have been forwarded through some Affghans at Lerdhianah, to the house where Witherington had left his poor wife. Thence it was forwarded under cover to me. I was most painfully embarrassed you may be sure—felt the difficulty of my position greatly—when I had to communicate to the poor wo-

man the grievous intelligence of the massacre of the Affghan force . . . but this morning, if possible, I felt still more grievously perplexed—more painfully embarrassed. It is strange, but Mrs. Witherington has all along been hoping against hope. She has ever steadfastly refused to believe that her husband was dead, as his name had never been mentioned in any lists which had been received . . . no authentic tidings of him at all. I thought it would be cruel to encourage, on no surer foundation, such wild hopes as these. I thought it would be better for her to learn speedily the sad lesson of resignation. But, no; she refused even to order any mourning apparel, saying that she was quite sure that she should have to lay it aside again . . . and she has proved herself a true prophet. This morning a package arrived addressed to me. It contained a small wax cloth parcel, and a letter, both addressed to Mrs. Witherington—the hand-writing on both I knew to be her husband's. I could not regard this as any certain proof of his existence, for both letter and parcel might have been despatched before the force left Caubul, nor could I, of course, open letters addressed to Mrs. Witherington. I had no alternative, therefore, but to tell her, as cautiously as I could, that certain letters in her husband's hand-writing had been received; they might, I said, have been written before, they might have been written after, the retreat. Had she the courage to open them? I put the parcel and the letter into her hands. Trembling from head to foot, she tore open the letter without speaking a word, read a few lines, clasped her hands together, uttered

a loud shriek, and sunk back insensible upon the couch. On returning to consciousness, which she soon did, on the application of the usual restoratives, the first thing she asked for was the letter. It was given her; she read it again and again, and then, bursting into tears, she cried, 'I was right—I was quite right—he lives —I was sure he did!' She then gave me the letter to read. It was written hastily—in some parts almost incoherently — but it declared plainly enough the one great fact of his escape. It alluded to some documents—a will—which he had prepared before leaving Caubul, and which, he said, had been witnessed by Lieutenant Carrington of the ——, who had fallen."

"Poor Arthur!"—exclaimed Mary, through her tears. She had thought, when Winter began to speak, that he might be able to supply evidence of Carrington's escape—a hope which had soon been dissipated—"Poor Arthur—his death is sure?" . . .

"I fear so," said Dr. Winter, and then resumed. "Witherington said that the other witness was Lieutenant Rivers. He also had fallen. One of the prisoners had seen his lifeless body at the barrier, in the Jugdulluk Pass."

"Poor fellow," said Herbert Grey, "I knew him well, when I was in Writers' Buildings. Poor Harry Rivers! His name, I believe, was Ernest—but we always called him Harry; a name I fancy he brought from school. He was a very Hotspur, till disappointment broke his spirit. I knew his history well; he was sacrificed to a long engagement."

"As for Witherington himself," resumed Dr. Win-

ter, "It appears, as far as I could gather the facts from his somewhat confused letter, that he had been severely wounded; and, in this predicament, left beneath a tree to die. He would undoubtedly have perished, but for the benevolent offices of an Affghan horseman—a kinsman it seems, of a servant of his—no, I think he said his servant's wife, who recognised him, as he lay dying; and mindful of certain kindnesses done by Witherington to him or his family, raised him from the ground, mounted the wounded man before him on his horse, carried him to a place of safety, and eventually conveyed him to the place where the other prisoners were confined. This appears to be the substance of the communication. . . . Dear Mrs. Witherington! I wept for joy, like a child, with her."

"'Curses," said Herbert Grey, "are like young chickens; they ever come home to roost.' And so it would seem do blessings."

"They do," rejoined Winter. "It is very certain that Affghan gratitude was his salvation. But I must tell you that the larger parcel, which I delivered over to Mrs. Witherington, contained her husband's will, a very long letter written by him at Caubul—and one addressed to Miss Balfour."

"To Adela!" exclaimed Mary.

"Yes; I am now the bearer of it. It appears to have been written at Caubul, enclosed with the documents, which Witherington was so anxious to preserve. I give it to you," putting the letter into Mary's hands. "To whom could I better entrust it? Your sound

judgment—your affectionate kindness—your true womanly delicacy—will teach you what to do with it—will teach you the proper time to deliver it to its owner.

* * * * * *

The proper time came ere long, and Adela read the letter. Abundance of tears were shed—tears from the overflowing heart. It was a letter so full of open, manly love—of generous trust in Adela's affection, in her unshaken constancy—her strong devotion. It was written cheerfully—hopefully—written, as it seemed, in the confidence of a joyous reunion—a joyous reunion in God's own time. There was much in it which Adela could not read without bitter anguish—without deep humiliation; but there was something which filled her with new-born joy—filled her with hopes, to which she had long been a stranger; there were expressions in that letter—there were feelings, opinions rather hinted at than expressed, which made Adela have faith that a "joyous reunion" *would* be accomplished in God's own time; and for this crowning mercy, oh! how fervently did Adela thank the Giver of all good things.

A few more words will suffice. Herbert Grey and Mary Balfour did nothing to supply us with a subject, in case we should ever be tempted to write a second series of "Long Engagements." They were married as soon after the announcement of the terrible catastrophe of the Affghan Rebellion, as their own feelings would permit. They are now in India, and very happy. Grey has paid off all his debts, and is in the enjoy-

ment of an ample income. We are not sure that his dislike to enter into "money matters," is quite worn out; but as he conceals nothing from Mary, and as she never turns away from any thing, merely because it is unpleasant, we have little fear that these money matters will again be thrown into confusion.

Mr. Lorimer was married last year to a foolish, little, fair-haired doll—a new arrival, whom he fell in love with at the Town Hall, when on leave to Calcutta, from a Mofussil station, to which he had been appointed. We do not know whether he has yet repented; but think it probable, now that the hot weather has worked off some of her bloom, that he will soon have leisure for the enjoyment of a little gentlemanly regret.

Captain Danvers, A.D.C., went home with the governor-general, to whose suite he was attached. We believe that he is still single; and that he has never, since he left Calcutta, been so indiscreet as to suffer fooling to rise into feeling—to approach the verge of a genuine attachment.

As for the Balfours, they are now in England; so is Dr. Winter. Edmund's impaired health drove him at last to seek for new life in his own native country. To Adela the change was equally essential, and she of course accompanied her brother. We know not when they return to India. Balfour, in the neighbourhood which he selected for his residence, is much esteemed and admired; and there are some people who, deriving their knowledge of Indian nabobs from bad novels and

worse comedies, can scarcely bring themselves to believe that a man of such extensive information, gentle manners, mild demeanour, and sterling integrity, can have spent nearly twenty years in hunting tigers, eating curry, thumb-screwing natives, and sacking gold. The ladies of his family are equally admired. There is one fair girl—his sister Adela—who, simply clad, with basket on her arm, may often be seen on her way to that part of the village where the poor principally reside. She is happy, for she has been led unto fountains of living waters, and God has wiped away all tears from her eyes.

THE END.

ERRATA.

At page 45, line 3, for "many-windowed prows" read "many-windowed *poops.*"
——— 78, line 21, for "Balfour" read "*Grey.*"
——— 93, line 15, for "she been" read "she *had* been"
——— 140, line 2, 3, for "unsparing troops of the heavy chargers" read "unsparing *hoofs* of the heavy chargers."
——— 165, line 12, for "can inspire none" read "can *injure* none."

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